

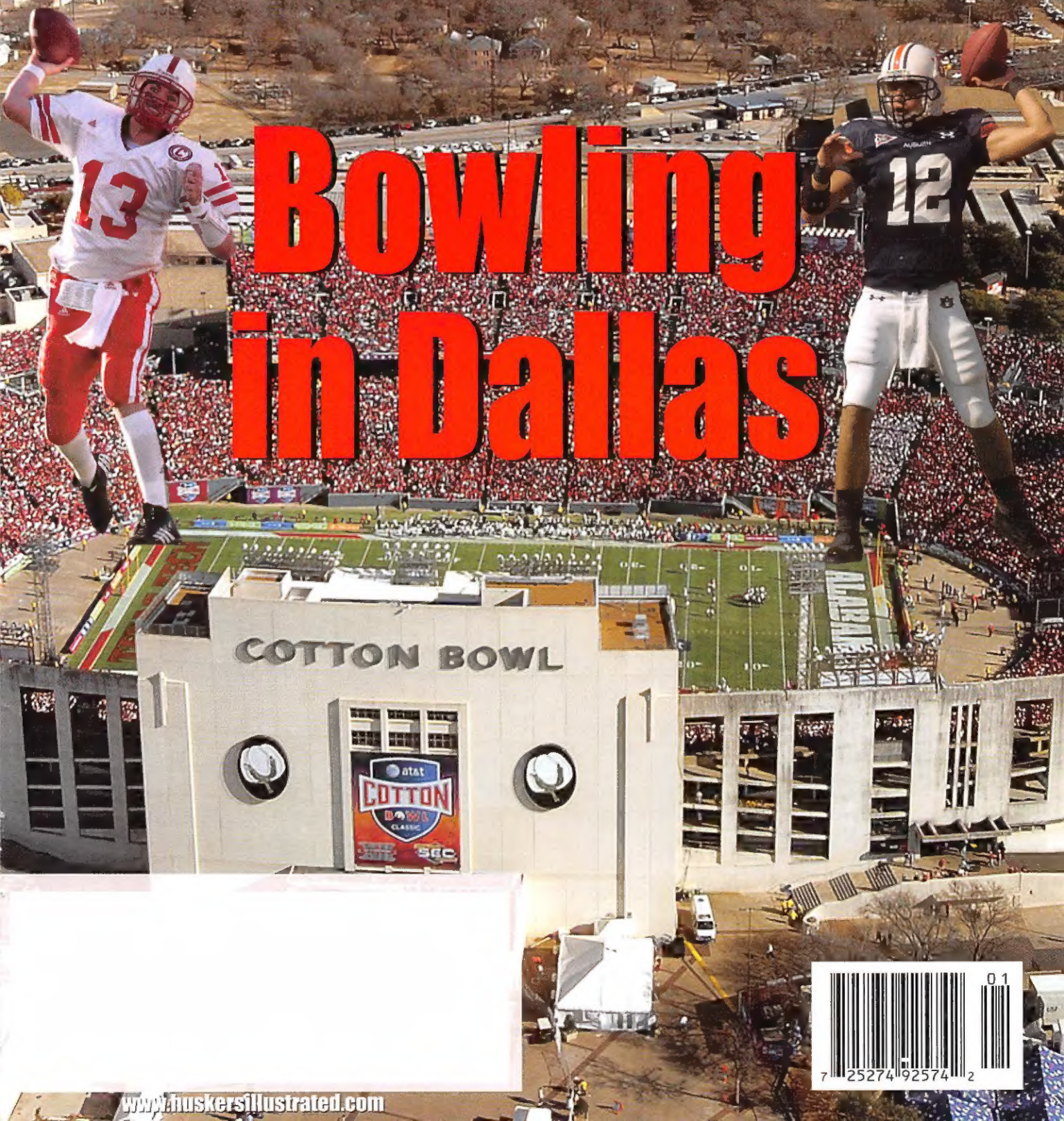
Huskers Illustrated

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Volume 27, No. 1

JANUARY 2007 • \$3.95

Bowling in Dallas



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Cotton Bowl Memories

*Auburn presents huge challenge
as NU returns to Dallas for the first time in 27 years*



Brian Hill

I'M NOT SURE what I expected, but I remember thinking that the Cotton Bowl stadium was really old.

That would have been Jan. 1, 1980, my first bowl game and the last time Nebraska played in the Cotton Bowl. Houston defeated the Huskers 17-14 on a 6-yard pass from Terry Elston to Eric Herring with just 12 seconds remaining.

Twenty-seven years later, Nebraska (1-2 in three Cotton Bowl appearances) will have a chance to even its record in the Dallas game when it faces Auburn Jan. 1. The Huskers are 3-0 against the Tigers, including a 13-7 victory in the 1964 Orange Bowl.

The Huskers will begin 2007 in Dallas after losing 21-7 to Oklahoma in the Dec. 2 Big 12 Championship Game in Kansas City. Nebraska had great field position most of the game but couldn't cash in. NU limited the Sooners to just 42 yards rushing but committed an uncharacteristic five turnovers.

You can read more about the Huskers' first appearance in the Big 12 title game since 1999 and look ahead to the Cotton Bowl in this edition of *Huskers Illustrated*. Junior tackle Carl Nicks answers "10 Questions," and senior wrestler Dominick Moyer is the subject of "Spotlight." We also have an update on the top-ranked Nebraska volleyball team, which was preparing for the final

four in Omaha as this edition went to press. You'll find a season wrap-up in our February edition.

Speaking of February, NU is entering the home stretch of the recruiting season, with Signing Day set for Feb. 7. It'll be interesting to see if defensive line coach John Blake's departure for North Carolina has an effect.

Next month's edition obviously will include complete coverage of the Cotton Bowl, Nebraska's fourth game against a top-10 opponent. The other three haven't turned out so well, but you never know.

The thought going into last year's

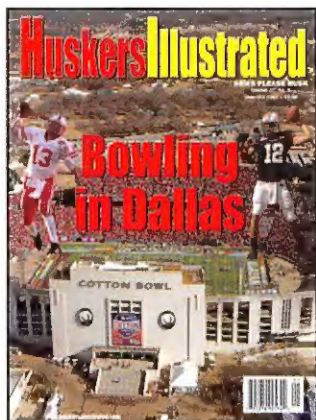
Alamo Bowl was that maybe Michigan was disappointed to be there. As you know, the Huskers rallied to defeat the favored Wolverines, 32-28. Michigan's only loss since was the 42-39 setback at top-ranked Ohio State on Nov. 18.

The season-long No. 1-rated Buckeyes face second-ranked Florida in the Jan. 8 BCS Championship Game in Glendale, Ariz.

Florida's only loss was a 27-17 setback at Auburn on Oct. 14. The Tigers also boast a 7-3 win over LSU, which is ranked No. 4 entering the Jan. 1 Sugar Bowl. According to its bowl media guide, that makes Auburn the only team to have defeated two teams ranked in the top five of the final regular season poll, as well as the only team to beat two teams playing in BCS bowl games.

Auburn was ranked No. 2 after beating LSU on Sept. 16 and remained there until being upset 27-10 by Arkansas on Oct. 7. The Tigers were back up to No. 5 before being pasted 37-15 by unranked Georgia on Nov. 11.

Nebraska obviously was disappointed in how it played against Oklahoma with a shot at the Fiesta Bowl on the line. But Auburn, which enters the Cotton Bowl ranked 10th with a 10-2 mark, certainly has to be thinking about what might have been. ■



ON THE COVER

Nebraska's Zac Taylor (left) and Auburn's Brandon Cox lead their teams into a Jan. 1 matchup in the Cotton Bowl. Cover photos by Scott Bruhn; Todd J. Van Ernst, Auburn University Athletic Department; and Ian Halperin, CBAA Photographer.

Huskers Illustrated (ISSN 0279-3474) is published monthly January through May and August, bi-monthly June/July and weekly September through mid-December except open dates. Single issue cost \$3.95 (year-book \$7.95); subscription rate for one year (19 issues) is \$51.95. First Class postage is available for an additional charge of \$19.00 per year. Foreign postage \$34.00.

Huskers Illustrated is published by Landmark Community Newspapers, 2623 Regency Rd., Lexington, KY 40503. Periodicals postage paid at Lexington, KY, and additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *Huskers Illustrated*, 2623 Regency Road, Lexington, KY 40503.

Address all editorial-related correspondence to *Huskers Illustrated*, 3210 NW 3rd St., Lincoln, NE 68521.

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Huskers Illustrated

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17

10 COTTON BOWL OPPONENTS SIMILAR

Auburn's offense is similar to Nebraska's, run-oriented, featuring its tailbacks. The Tiger defense also is similar to Nebraska's, according to eighth-year head coach Tommy Tuberville. *By Mike Babcock*

NEXT ISSUE

The Cotton Bowl review edition will be mailed Jan. 15. Check for updates at huskersillustrated.com.

'Team Award'

Zac Taylor credited everyone on the offense. And he credited the coaches. He even credited the defense. "Everybody knows they've played a big part in that," he said.

The senior quarterback was referring to his being selected the Big 12 Offensive Player of the Year. "I know they give it to an individual, but really, it's a team award," he said. "It would be nice if you could give it to everybody on the offense. But unfortunately, just one guy gets it."

Taylor became the ninth Cornhusker to be named conference offensive player of the year, with I-back Mike Rozier and quarterback Eric Crouch both earning the award twice.

"It's a great honor that people thought enough to vote for me," said Taylor, who was voted the award by both the conference coaches and the Associated Press.

Three other Cornhuskers were chosen to the coaches' all-conference first team: senior fullback Dane Todd, senior defensive end Adam Carriker and junior linebacker Bo Ruud. Juniors Brandon Jackson and Maurice Purify and senior Jay Moore were included on the second team.

The coaches also chose Carriker, who earned first-team recognition from the Associated Press last season, as the Big 12 Defensive Lineman of the Year — a first-time award.

No one was more surprised than Todd, who, like the others, learned of his selection at the end of practice the week of the Big 12 championship game. "I'm shocked by it, to say the least," he said. "I'm still going to check the piece of paper that says I am before I believe anything."

He also credited. "It's a tribute to not just me but our offensive line. If they're not doing their jobs, I can't do mine," he said. "The backs are making me look good a lot of the time, and Zac's done such a nice job of throwing the football that it's allowed us to be able to run the ball a lot more."

Others have done the running. He hasn't gotten a carry since he was a red-shirted freshman, under the previous coaching staff, when he ran twice for 6 yards.

He has never been concerned about that, however. "I came here as a blocking back," Todd said. "I've always viewed the fullbacks at Nebraska as blocking backs, never really followed it



Zac Taylor



Adam Carriker

enough to realize how much they got in the past. So when I got here, I changed my role to basically, purely blocking.

"That's fine with me. Everybody's got a jog to do on the team, and I found mine."

Todd is the first Cornhusker fullback to earn first-team all-conference recognition since Tom Rathman in 1985. The only other Nebraska fullbacks to be so honored since the return of two-platoon football in 1964 were Andra Franklin (1980), Dick Davis (1967) and Frank Solich (1965).

"That position can't be measured by statistics," said offensive coordinator Jay Norvell. "He's a tremendous blocker. He falls in the line of the great fullbacks that have played here. He's that kind of guy for us. We're going to miss him when he's gone because it's the kind of position that you really don't appreciate until he's not around and because he's always in the right place at the right time."

Todd and Ruud also were teammates at Lincoln (Neb.) Southeast High School. "I was just happy to hear Dane made it," Ruud said, "for Zac and Carriker, too, everybody that made it."

"It's an honor for all of us."

THREE ON AP FIRST TEAM

Taylor and Carriker were first-team all-conference selections by the Associated Press, along with Jackson, while sophomore offensive lineman Matt Slauson was second-team. Sophomore I-back Marlon Lucky tied with Oklahoma State's Perrish Cox in voting for the AP's second-team all-purpose back.

In addition, linebackers Stewart Bradley and Corey McKeon, defensive backs Cortney Grixby, Andrew Shanle and Terre Green and offensive linemen Brett Byford, Greg Austin and Kurt Mann earned all-conference honorable mention from the coaches, the Associated Press or both. ■

COACHES ALL-BIG 12 TEAM

OFFENSE

WR	Adarius Bowman	Jr.	Oklahoma St.
WR	Joel Filani	Sr.	Texas Tech
WR	Limas Sweed	Jr.	Texas
TE	Martin Rucker	Jr.	Missouri
OL	*Justin Blalock	Sr.	Texas
OL	Kasey Studdard	Sr.	Texas
OL	Corey Hilliard	Sr.	Oklahoma St.
OL	Joel Clinger	Sr.	Missouri
OL	Chris Messner	Sr.	Oklahoma
QB	Zac Taylor	Sr.	Nebraska
RB	Jon Cornish	Sr.	Kansas
RB	*Adrian Peterson	Jr.	Oklahoma
FB	Dane Todd	Sr.	Nebraska
PK	*Mason Crosby	Sr.	Colorado
KR	Yamon Figurs	Sr.	Kansas St.

DEFENSE

DL	C.J. Ah You,	Sr.	Oklahoma
DL	Adam Carriker	Sr.	Nebraska
DL	Ian Campbell	So.	Kansas St.
DL	Abraham Wright	Sr.	Colorado
DL	Larry Birdine	Sr.	Oklahoma
LB	Rufus Alexander	Sr.	Oklahoma
LB	Marcus Bacon	Sr.	Missouri
LB	Bo Ruud	Jr.	Nebraska
DB	Michael Griffin	Sr.	Texas
DB	Aaron Ross	Sr.	Texas
DB	Aqib Talib	So.	Kansas
DB	Melvin Bullitt	Sr.	Texas A&M
DB	Terrence Wheatley Jr.		Colorado
P	Daniel Sepulveda	Sr.	Baylor

*Three-time first-team selection

Offensive Player of the Year — Taylor, Nebraska

Defensive Player of the Year — Alexander, Oklahoma

Special Teams Player of the Year — Sepulveda, Baylor

Offensive Freshman of the Year — Colt McCoy, QB, Texas

Defensive Freshman of the Year — Andre Sexton, S, Oklahoma State

Offensive Newcomer of the Year — Bowman, Oklahoma State

Defensive Newcomer of the Year — Misi Tupe, LB, Texas A&M

Offensive Lineman of the Year — Blalock, Texas

Defensive Lineman of the Year — Carriker, Nebraska

Coach of the Year — Bob Stoops, Oklahoma

NEBRASKA CONFERENCE

OFFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR

1972 — Johnny Rodgers, WB (UPI)

1981 — Dave Rimmington, C (AP)

1982 — Mike Rozier, IB (AP, UPI)

1983 — Rozier (AP, Coaches)

1989 — Gerry Gdowski, QB (Coaches)

1992 — Calvin Jones, IB (Coaches)
Derek Brown, IB (AP)

1995 — Tommie Frazier, QB (AP, Coaches)

(Big 12)

1999 — *Eric Crouch, QB (Coaches)

2001 — Crouch, (AP, Coaches)

*Co-winner

Quick Hits

GOOD-BYE JOHN

Barely a week after the Big 12 championship game loss against Oklahoma, the Cornhusker football team lost defensive line coach John Blake to North Carolina.

Newly hired Tar Heels head coach Butch Davis and Blake were defensive assistants together for the NFL Super Bowl champion Dallas Cowboys in 1993, and there was much speculation that Blake would join his friend as a step toward becoming a head coach again. Blake was the head coach at Oklahoma from 1996 to 1998.

"I want to thank Coach Blake for his efforts and contributions as part of our coaching staff for the past three years," coach Bill Callahan said in a release. "This is an opportunity that John felt would enhance him professionally, and we certainly wish him all the best in the future."

The 45-year-old Blake, regarded as a top recruiter national, was among the first assistants Callahan hired. He spent the previous season as defensive line coach at Mississippi State.

It was not immediately clear whether Blake would remain through the Cotton Bowl.



John Blake

IT'S ACADEMIC

One day, Husker Sarah Pavan was named the Big 12 Volleyball Player of the Year for a second consecutive season. And the next she was named the ESPN the Magazine Academic All-American of the Year. The junior from Kitchener, Ontario, also is a two-time, first-team Academic All-American.

Pavan, a biochemistry major, has a 4.0 cumulative grade-point average.

Cornhusker Dane Todd, a graduate student this season, had a 4.0 GPA in completing an undergraduate degree in biological sciences. Todd, the first-team All-Big 12 fullback, earned Academic All-America recognition for a second consecutive season, this time on the second team.

He and center Kurt Mann were first-team selections last season. Nebraska leads the nation in Academic All-Americans in football as well as in all sports. It has produced 86 in football, with 62 of them first-team selections. The Cornhuskers have had at least one Academic All-American in football in 20 of the past 21 seasons.

Todd, a three-time Academic All-Big 12 honoree, is the first to earn Academic All-America recognition in back-to-back seasons since Kyle Vanden Bosch in 1999 and 2000.

Nebraska has produced 235 Academic All-Americans in all sports.

Todd was an Academic All-District honoree for a third consecutive year, while football teammates J. B. Phillips, Andy Christensen and Brandon Rigoni were second-team selections.

All four were first-team Academic All-Big 12 honorees, as were Mann, Lance Brandenburgh, Adam Carriker, Jordan Congdon, Andy Kadavy, Newt Lingenfelter, Matt O'Hanlon, Todd Peterson, Zach Potter, Andrew Shanle and Dan Titchener.

ON TOP AGAIN

Nebraska led the Big 12 Conference in exhausted eligibility rate for a fourth consecutive year, according to federal graduation rates released by the NCAA in early November.

Nebraska exhausted eligibility rate was 94 percent, one point higher than a year ago and three points higher than Baylor, which was second in the conference. The national average is 85 percent.

The remainder of the conference: Texas Tech and Iowa State 90 percent, Texas 89, Missouri 87, Kansas 86, Oklahoma and Colorado 84, Texas A&M 83, Oklahoma State 80, Kansas State 59.

The Cornhusker football team had an 88-percent graduation success rate, best in the Big 12, and a one-class (1999-2000 entering class) rate of 84 percent, also tops in the conference and well above the national average of 55 percent.

WOMEN'S GOLF

Husker women's golf coach Robin Krapfl signed two high school seniors to letters of intent, Kayle Knopik from Papillion-LaVista



Sarah Pavan

(Neb.) High and Mary Kate Bird from St. Teresa's Academy in Kansas City, Mo. Knopik, among the top junior players in Nebraska, was runner-up to Husker freshman JC Stevenson at the 2006 Nebraska Girls Match Play Tournament and finished fifth in the Nebraska High School Class A Tournament. Bird tied for 37th at the Junior PGA Championship in Westfield, Ohio, over the summer and was second at the Calloway PGA Junior Series in Des Moines.

MEN'S GYMNASTICS

Coach Francis Allen's team, ranked No. 10 in the GymInfo pre-season coaches' poll, has added four athletes to its 2007 recruiting class.

Sam Auge	Anoka, Minn.
Cory Baumgarten	Plano, Texas
Bear Danley	Buffalo Grove, Ill.
Anthony Ingrelli	West Allis, Ill.

"The class we've brought in this year might prove to be just as good as the guys we signed in 2006," said Allen. "They are incredibly talented gymnasts."

The 2006 class included 10, the Huskers' largest group of recruits in five years. Nebraska has six returning lettermen, including all-arounders Stephen Tetrault and Jason Wassung. Tetrault, a junior, is an All-American on vault, while Wassung, a senior, has been nationally ranked in the all-around the past three seasons. The Huskers open their season at the Rocky Mountain Open on Jan. 12.

WOMEN'S GYMNASTICS

Coach Dan Kendig announced the signing of three recruits to letters of intent.

Erin Davis	Round Rock, Texas
Kathryn Howard	Houston, Texas
Stephanie Seich	South Amboy, N.J.

Kendig's team was ranked seventh nationally in the pre-season coaches' poll released by the National Association of Collegiate Gymnastics Coaches. Defending NCAA champion Georgia was No. 1.

The Huskers open the season at the Super Six Challenge in Fayetteville, Ark., on Jan. 5. The field will include No. 3-ranked Florida, No. 9 LSU, No. 14 Penn State, No. 15 Arkansas and No. 17 Denver.

Nebraska has seven All-Americans returning, including Emily Parsons, a seven-time honoree. Parsons led the Huskers to a fifth-place finish at the 2006 Super Six Finals in Corvallis, Ore.

POST-SEASON FOOTBALL TEAM AWARDS

Offensive MVP: Zac Taylor, QB, Sr., Norman, Okla.

Defensive MVP: Adam Carriker, DE, Sr., Kennewick, Wash.

Special teams MVP: Rickey Thenarse, DB, Fr., Los Angeles

Offensive scout team MVP: Sam Keller, QB, Sr., Danville, Calif.

Defensive scout team MVP: Tony Sullivan, DE, Jr., Wahoo, Neb.

***Guy Chamberlin Trophy:** Taylor

***Tom Novak Trophy:** Greg Austin, OG, Sr., Cypress, Texas

Cletus Fischer Native Son Award: Dane Todd, FB, Sr., Lincoln, Neb.

*media vote

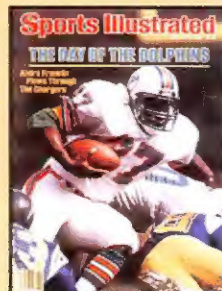
IN MEMORIAM

Former Cornhusker football player Andra Franklin died in Lincoln, at age 47, in early December. He had been dealing with heart problems in recent years.

Nebraska recruited Franklin from Anniston, Ala., much to the chagrin of Alabama coach Bear Bryant. He played fullback, earning a letter as a true freshman and then starting for three seasons.

He was a first-team All-Big Eight selection as a senior in 1980 and finished as the Cornhuskers' career-rushing leader among fullbacks, with 1,738 yards and 10 touchdowns.

Franklin was a second-round draft pick of the Miami Dolphins and played four seasons in the NFL, before a knee injury cut



Andra Franklin was on the cover in 1983.

short his career. ■

Lone Star Priority

*Cotton Bowl appearance will enhance
Nebraska's recruiting presence in the talent-rich state*



**Mike
BABCOCK**

J.B. PHILLIPS IS GOING HOME for the holidays. Nebraska's junior tight end is from Colleyville, Texas, about 30 minutes from the Cotton Bowl stadium, depending on traffic.

He has attended football games there, though never on New Year's Day.

"It's a great stadium," he said. "It's got a lot of tradition to it."

Now, he'll have an opportunity to play there, in front of family and friends.

Phillips was among a handful of players who talked with reporters on the day after Nebraska accepted an official invitation to play Auburn in the Cotton Bowl. Predictably, he was asked if he would be looking for extra tickets from teammates to meet his personal demand. "I don't want to be that guy who tries to grab all the tickets," he said. "It might become that. But we've got a lot of other Texas kids."

Actually, the roster lists only eight others from Texas, three of them walk-ons. And that's not enough for coach Bill Callahan, who has made recruiting in the Lone Star State a priority.

"There are a lot of great players in Texas," he said. No great insight there. According to a U.S. Census Bureau estimate, the state's population in 2005 was more than 22 million.

By comparison, Nebraska's population is about 1.7 million.

Population base explains Callahan's assigning five assistants to recruit Texas. Jay Norvell Phil Elmassian, Ted Gilmore and Shawn Watson have responsibilities there, as did the departed John Blake.

But it's more than that. "The coaches do a very good job of getting those kids ready to play," Callahan said. High school football players in Texas are "exposed" to a "college-type regimen."

Football is year around. Texas high schools have spring practice, and "the high school coaches are like college coaches," said Callahan. "They're full-time coaches. That's all they do."

"There's an importance placed on it, so the kids are always grinding on 'ball.'"

As a result, "you're getting a real finished product in that regard," he said.

The University of Texas has "dominated" in-state recruiting of late, Callahan said before the Cornhuskers and Longhorns played in October. "They basically select."

"They're in the selection business instead of the recruiting business."

The Longhorns have a tremendous advantage, of course. But

they can't select every great high school player in the state not only because of NCAA scholarship limits but also because stock-piling talent is becoming increasingly difficult. Young players are reluctant to sit and wait.

That's why Harrison Beck left for North Carolina State. And it's why quarterback Jevan Snead asked Texas coach Mack Brown to be released from his scholarship in late November.

Snead, who is from Stephenville, Texas, was among the Longhorns' prize recruits in 2006, after backing out of an oral commitment to Florida. He enrolled at mid-year and went through spring practice, but decided to transfer after backing up redshirted freshman Colt McCoy.

In any case, Nebraska has recruited well in Texas, particularly in the mid to late 1980s. Tom Osborne's 1989 scholarship recruiting class included more players from Texas than from Nebraska, in fact. Callahan's first three recruiting classes included only one each: wide receiver Terrence Nunn (Houston), I-back Cody Glenn (Rusk) and wide-receiver Will Henry (El Paso). That's going to change, and dramatically. Nebraska had 20 commitments in mid-December, seven of them from Texas.

Big 12 membership already provides recruiting exposure in Texas, of course. Nebraska plays in the state every season now, though whether the Huskers are better off in that respect than they were as members of the Big Eight — with the problems and resulting negative perception that led to the dissolution of the Southwest Conference — is unclear. But a Cotton Bowl appearance, something they haven't made since the 1980 game, will enhance their recruiting presence in the talent-rich state.

Also, Nebraska can benefit from playing in a traditional New Year's Day bowl, something it hasn't done since the 2001 season. "Being a Jan. 1 bowl just really validates the progress this team has made," Callahan said during the conference call announcing the Cotton Bowl match-up.

The progress has been significant considering the degree of change, not only in the system but also in the players. "I think the profile was different, a different type of player we were looking for," said Callahan. "I think we're getting there. I don't think we're there yet; I really don't."

"We're making strides to getting more players that fit what we want to get done."

And Texas is among the best places to find them. ■



**Tight end J.B. Phillips
is one of nine Texans
on the NU roster.**

Nebraska's Texas All-Americans

Keyuo Craver, DB	Harleton (2001)
Aaron Taylor, C-OG	Wichita Falls (1996-97)
Aaron Graham, C	Denton (1995)
Travis Hill, OLB	Pearland (1992)
Kenny Walker, DL	Crane (1990)
Jake Young, C	Midland (1988-89)
Doug Glaser, OT	Mesquite (1989)
Broderick Thomas, OLB	Houston (1987-88)
Junior Miller, TE	Midland (1979)
Kelvin Clark, OT	Odessa (1978)

Mike Babcock is a former sports columnist for the Lincoln Journal Star. He has covered Nebraska football for nearly 30 years. Mike can be reached at MBABCOCK1@neb.rr.com or P.O. Box 6782, Lincoln, NE 68506.

Debate Rages

*Are bowl games a good basis
for determining strength of conferences?*



Curt McKEEVER

WILL THE BIG TEN be hailed as the top conference in the country if Ohio State beats Florida in the BCS Championship Game in Glendale, Ariz., on Jan. 8?

Or, if that happens, will the result of the Capital One Bowl (which matches Wisconsin against Arkansas) and Outback Bowl (which pits Penn State against Tennessee) allow the Southeastern Conference to claim supremacy?

Don't say you don't care, either, because the debate about conference strength rages an entire season.

I just have a problem with people settling it based on the outcome of post-season games — unless, of course, they were a part of a playoff system.

What Lloyd Carr and his Michigan Wolverines could use right now is that plus-one model that's been suggested, where the championship matchup would be determined after the four BCS bowls are played.

Sure, Michigan has a traditional Rose Bowl matchup against Southern California. But how excited can the Wolverines really be when you know they feel like they belong in Arizona instead of Florida for a rematch with Ohio State?

Then, there's Wisconsin. The Badgers also lost just once, and yet they can't even play in a BCS game because of a rule that prevents three teams from one conference from winding up in the eight slots. Wow. I bet they're really pumped to play the Razorbacks.

Sorry. You want to measure true conference strength, pick a time before December and January. Bowl games are a lot like that movie where as you walk in the door, you let your mind go because you know what you're about to watch probably won't depict reality.

Most bowl games are too unpredictable because the teams react differently to where they get sent. They also prepare with different goals (and sometimes injury issues).

Take Nebraska and Auburn, which square off in the Cotton Bowl. The Tigers wrapped up their regular season on Nov. 18, then had nearly a month off before starting bowl practice on Dec. 14. Meanwhile, the Huskers played on Nov. 24 and Dec. 2, and began work for the Cotton Bowl on Dec. 9.

While an SEC fan can rightfully argue Auburn is the better team with a 10-2 record that includes wins against Florida and LSU, it'd be dangerous for them to think a win against the 9-4 Huskers is an automatic.

Maybe Auburn, which once was ranked No. 2, really will be focused on winning. Or perhaps the Tigers just might focus their attention during bowl practices on preparing upcoming underclassmen for next season.

"The way I look at it," NU sophomore tight end Hunter Teafatiller said, "make those kids go out with a smile on their face. I mean, it's a good experience for the young guys, no

doubt about it. But, to me, the most important thing is making sure these seniors get what they deserved."

You'll read that a lot if you check out advance stories for most of the 32 bowl games (which, by the way, account for 54 percent of all I-A teams). Take them for what they are — well-intended comments.

Just the same, I'd rather see a Virginia Tech-Georgia matchup in October or November rather than at the Chick-fil-A bowl to get a better feel for whether the Atlantic Coast could challenge the SEC.

Texas A&M and Cal, both 9-3, might look like a good matchup in the Holiday Bowl. But Cal was a top 10 team to start the season, so I'm not sure the Bears will be playing with their ears pinned back.

Are we to believe the WAC is better than the Big 12 if Boise State, playing in its first BCS game, beats Oklahoma?

Please. It's become hard enough trying to get the right two teams in the championship game. And that's the only reason the BCS system was instituted.

Or are there other agendas?

After losing to Florida in the SEC championship, Arkansas coach Houston Nutt said the Gators deserved the chance to play Ohio State. Never mind that Florida entered the weekend fourth in the BCS behind the idle Buckeyes, USC (which lost) and the idle Wolverines.

"This is the toughest conference in America," Nutt said. "I really wish everybody had the opportunity to go to Auburn, to go to Florida, to go to Arkansas, to go to LSU or let us come to their place. You do that and play that schedule. It's a hard schedule, really hard. It's hard to get to this game. I just feel like it's absolutely one of the most difficult things to do, to have one in loss in this league."

It was somewhat ironic that the BCS numbers came out right for the Gators. While it appeared some voters weren't thrilled about an Ohio State-Michigan rematch, Florida won its 1996 national championship at the Sugar Bowl by avenging a November loss to Florida State.

"I think the country wants to see the Southeastern Conference champion against the Big 10 champion. I think that's what this is all about," Gators coach Urban Meyer said after beating Arkansas.

He might be right about that, but I bet what the country would most like to see is a playoff.

"We're beyond the fact of do we need a playoff," Meyer added. "It's now, can we get one."

"It's an imperfect system. If you want a true national championship, the only way to do it is on the field."

Then again, how much fun could that be? We wouldn't get to argue about which conference was the best in the country. ■



Lloyd Carr's Michigan team got the Rose Bowl as consolation.

Curt McKeever is a sportswriter for the Lincoln Journal Star. In addition to reporting on football, he is the primary beat writer for baseball. Curt can be reached at cmckeever@journalstar.com

Similar

Auburn coach sees similarities between Cotton Bowl opponents

By Mike Babcock

Practice, practice, practice . . .
That's prominent among bowl-game benefits.

"If I had my druthers, I'd practice every day, maybe twice a day, with these bowl practices," Bill Callahan said on the day after Nebraska was officially invited to play in the Cotton Bowl. "I absolutely love 'em. I know they made our team last year, and I think it's a great, great bonus."

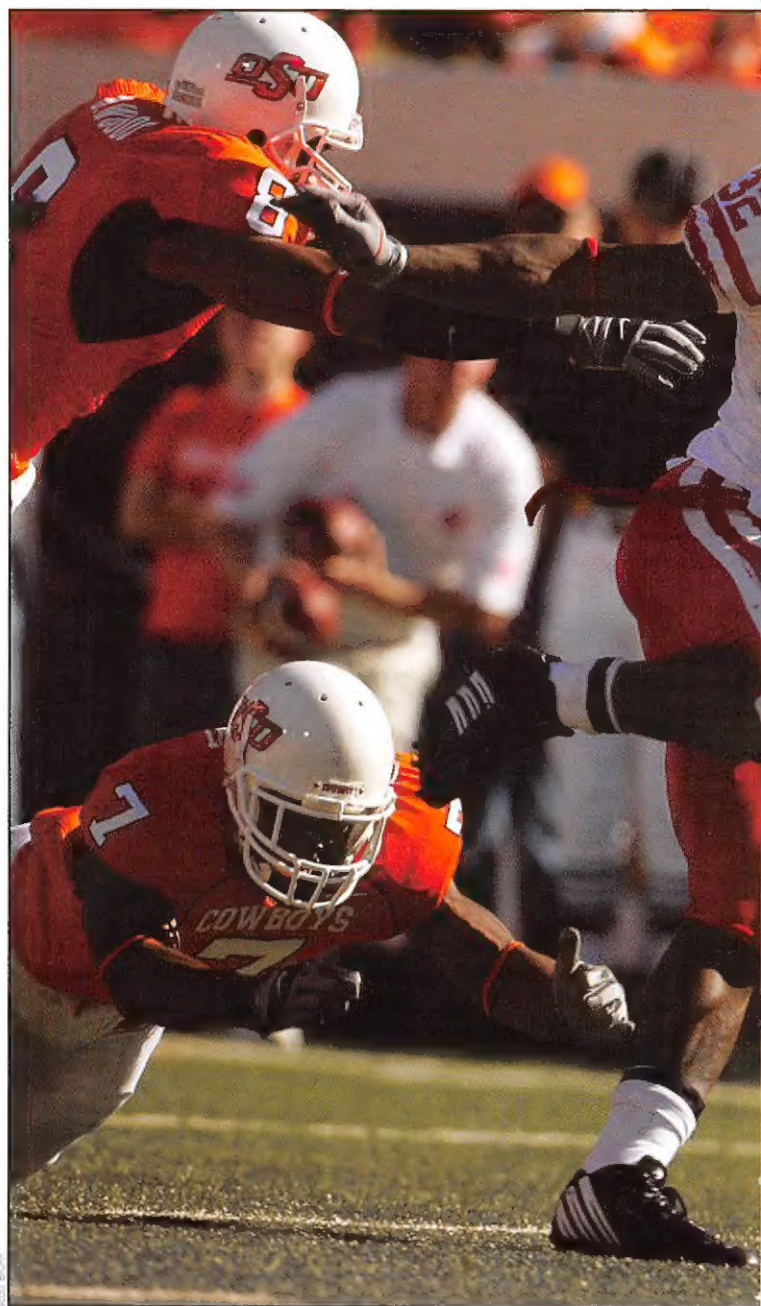
Bowl practices are about as valuable as any during the year, second only to pre-season training camp. Spring practice is limited to 15 sessions, not all in pads. And regular-season practices are limited by hours and arranged around class schedules. But final exams are finished by mid-December.

After exams, players are free, and "you can go crazy," said Callahan. "You can practice every day within the ramifications of the 20-hour (per week) rule. You can have a ball. So I'm really excited about bowl practices. And we're going to try to practice our kids as much as we can."

Actually, that hasn't been the case. Callahan gave the team a week off following the Big 12 championship game, and the week of final exams practice time was limited to two days of conditioning and seven-on-seven passing. Then came three "fundamental and developmental" practices.

Now, the focus in practice is on game-planning.

"We'll take that right down into the bowl, so that when we arrive there, we'll just duplicate what we did in those



practices, as we prepare for Auburn," Callahan said.

Nebraska is slated to leave for Dallas on the day after Christmas.

The Cornhuskers will play an Auburn team that brings a 10-2 record and No. 10 national ranking to the Jan. 1 game. The Tigers, ranked as high as No. 2 in early October, handed Florida, top-ranked Ohio State's opponent in the

Styles



Both teams like to run the football. Nebraska junior Brandon Jackson (left) has rushed for 951 yards and seven touchdowns. Auburn has been led by senior Kenny Irons (right) with 821 yards and four TDs.

BCS National Championship Game, its only loss, 27-17.

They also defeated No. 4-ranked LSU, another BCS bowl team.

Auburn's offense is similar to Nebraska's, run-oriented, featuring tailbacks Kenny Irons and Brad Lester. Irons

rushed for 821 yards in 10 games. Lester scored nine touchdowns. Quarterback Brandon Cox completed 153-of-250 passes for 2,087 yards and 13 touchdowns, with nine interceptions.

The Tiger defense also is similar to Nebraska's, accord-



"We are very excited. Our players love the opportunity to play against a team from the SEC who is very talented and renowned for what they have accomplished."

Nebraska's Bill Callahan

"It's two very similar teams that run the same offense — the West Coast offense — and two very similar defenses that attack the line of scrimmage and try to make plays."

Nebraska's Bill Callahan



Auburn (10-2, 6-1 SEC) vs. Nebraska (9-4, 5-3 Big 12), 10:40 a.m. (CST), Jan. 1, 2007
TV: Fox (Pat Summerall, Brian Baldinger, Krista Voda)

ing to eighth-year head coach Tommy Tuberville, "attack the line of scrimmage and try to make plays," he said.

Auburn ranks seventh nationally in scoring defense and 25th in total defense.

"I'm an old defensive coach — and Coach Callahan is an offensive guy — so we've put a lot of emphasis on defense," Tuberville said. "This year, we kind of changed our defense."

"We went more from a four-man front to a three-man front."

The change has come under coordinator Will Muschamp, who coordinated the Miami Dolphins' defense for coach Nick Saban in 2005 after working for Saban at LSU. "We needed to make some changes just to give ourselves an opportunity with the type of players we had," said Tuberville.

Junior Quentin Groves is such a player.

"He's what we call a 'tweener.' He's a linebacker and also could be a defensive end. And we play him that way," Tuberville said. "At times we put him on the line, and at times we put him at linebacker. That's one of

the reasons we went to more of a three-man front, playing him as an outside backer.

"He's got a lot of speed and quickness. He's meant a lot to our team. He's a big-play guy. He's learned to be a lot more physical than he was the first couple of years."

The 6-foot-4, 254-pound Groves, a junior, has been credited with 9.5 sacks for 62 yards in losses. He also leads the team in quarterback hurries with seven and forced fumbles with three.

In the victories against Florida and LSU, as well as a regular-season-ending, 22-15 victory against rival Alabama, "he was the guy there making the big plays for us," said Tuberville.

Groves is characteristic of Auburn's defense. It's young and not particularly big. Consider the first-team linebackers. Will Herring, the team's leading tackler, is 6-3 but weighs only 221 pounds. Karibi Dede is listed at 6-0 and 223. And Tray Blackmon is listed at 6-0 and 205.

Blackmon is among three redshirted freshmen atop the depth chart on

defense. The others are tackle Sen'Derrick Marks (6-2, 287) and free safety Aairon Savage (5-11, 191).

Because of the changes under Muschamp, the Tigers haven't been as consistent on defense as Tuberville would have liked. "But I feel like we're getting better each game," he said.

"We started grasping it more during the season with a lot of younger guys on our team. We recruit speed. We're not a big football team. We try to be physical, but we have a lot of speed on our team. I grew up, coached with Jimmy Johnson at Miami, and learned very early in my career there that the more speed you have, the more chance you have of creating turnovers and making big plays."

Turnovers plagued Nebraska in the Big 12 championship game; the Cornhuskers committed five, three interceptions and two fumbles. Naturally, that is a focus during bowl practices.

The time off also will provide time to heal, I-back Brandon Jackson's broken hand, for example. Jackson didn't

miss practice time, however. "He's got great toughness," Callahan said.

Though he didn't participate in team drills early on, just individual work, he was "out there catching balls with one hand, taking hand-offs," said Callahan. "It's incredible to see a guy like that, who's casted up, go out and practice. It's really a tribute to his toughness, his wanting to be back on the field."

The first couple of bowl practices included scrimmage time for young players, something the Cornhuskers didn't do a year ago at the beginning of Alamo Bowl preparations.

"I don't know if we had enough bodies last year, to be perfectly honest with you," Callahan said. "We're a little bit deeper right now. So it has allowed us some flexibility."

"It was great for everybody. It's invaluable."

True freshman defensive back Corey Young, who has contributed on special teams, was among those who merited mention by Callahan. Young made "some hellacious hits," he said.

The early practices also allowed for experimenting. A few players got a look at different positions, among them Jordan Picou, Victory Haines and J.B. Phillips. Picou moved from center to nose tackle. Haines took snaps at center. And Phillips, a tight end and H-back, practiced at full-back.

With the loss of All-Big 12 fullback Dane Todd next season and back-up Matt Senske sidelined for the bowl following back surgery, "that becomes a position of concern," said Callahan.

Though not an experiment, sophomore Matt Slauson moved from offensive tackle, where he started the first 11 games, to guard. His move was a result of an ankle injury suffered at Texas A&M. Junior college transfer Carl Nicks replaced him as the starter and played every snap against Colorado and Oklahoma. As a result, Slauson wasn't surprised about his return to guard.

He began training camp at guard, expecting that would be his position. But after a brief time there, he was moved back to tackle, where he had started at the end of his true freshman season.

When Nicks "did a really, really good job against Colorado, I was like,

'Oh man, now I have a little pressure on when I come back,' " Slauson said. "So no, I wasn't really surprised when they (coaches) said they wanted me to move. Pretty much after the Colorado game, when Carl did well, they said, 'We're going to look at you at guard, too, so be looking at the plays.'"

"Then for the Oklahoma game, they were like, 'All right, after this game, we're putting you at guard.' I think right now they're planning on me being a guard, and they always have. Hopefully I can be a guy who can play both in case they need it. But they're planning on me at guard for the bowl."

Such switching is a part of bowl

practices, just as much as preparing for one's opponent.

Quarterback Sam Keller, who red-shirted this season after transferring from Arizona State, also is benefiting from bowl practices. "We're going to grind on him," said Callahan. "We're going to try to get him indoctrinated and get him ready to roll for spring football so that he has a head start coming into this whole thing. He's been in all the meetings and he understands it pretty well."

"But we're going to give him a ton of reps."

For many reasons the extended practice time is "a bonus for our football team," Callahan said. ■



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Nebraska's Cotton Bowl Trips

Nebraska made its first trip to the Cotton Bowl following the 1964 season. The Cornhuskers took a 9-1 record and No. 6 national ranking to Dallas, as conference champions. A Big Eight agreement to send its champion to the Orange Bowl had expired the previous year, after Nebraska defeated Auburn 13-7.

That was the first of three Nebraska-Auburn games. The Cornhuskers also defeated Auburn in regular-season games in 1981 at Lincoln (17-3) and in 1982 at Auburn (41-7).

This year's Cotton Bowl could have been a rematch of the 1965 game, had LSU not earned a BCS at-large bid. The Cotton Bowl's agreement with the Southeastern Conference gives it a No. 3 pick, with the Capital One Bowl the No. 2 pick. The choices were Arkansas and Auburn.

The Capital One Bowl selected Arkansas, which lost to Florida in the SEC title game.

In any case, Nebraska went to the Cotton Bowl twice more, both under coach Tom Osborne. The Cornhuskers' last appearance in Dallas on New Year's Day was following the 1979 season.

For what it's worth, there's a common denominator in Nebraska's Cotton Bowl trips. Each has followed a loss to Oklahoma. In 1964, the Cornhuskers lost at Norman 17-7. In 1973, they lost in Lincoln 27-0. In 1979, they lost 17-14 at Norman (Zac Taylor's dad, Sherwood, was a Sooner senior). And this season, of course, Nebraska lost to the Sooners 21-7 at Kansas City.

Another common denominator for the three previous games has been less-than-balmy weather, including rain for the 1965 game and 30-degree temperatures for the 1974 game.

Jan. 1, 1965
Arkansas 10, Nebraska 7

Arkansas	3	0	0	7	—	10
Nebraska	0	7	0	0	—	7

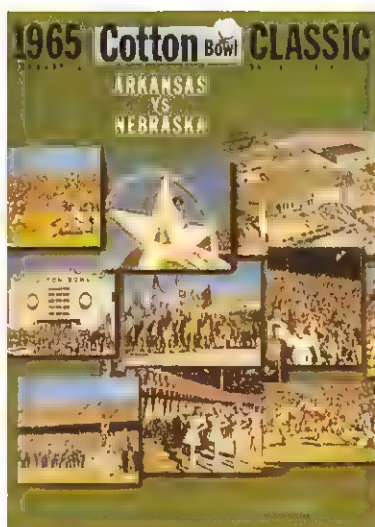
Attendance: 75,504 (est. 13,000 Nebraskans)

First Quarter
AR Tom McNelly 31 field goal, 9:47

Second Quarter
NU Harry Wilson 1 run (Duncan Drum kick), 7:45

Fourth Quarter
AR Bobby Burnett 3 run (McNelly kick), 4:41

Nebraska was picked fourth in the Big Eight in a pre-season media poll. The Cornhuskers were considered to be rebuilding in Bob Devaney's third season. And Devaney didn't dispute it.



The pieces came together, however, and Nebraska won the second of four consecutive conference championships and was matched against Southwest Conference champion Arkansas. Coach Frank Broyles' Razorbacks went to Dallas with a 10-0 record and No. 2 national ranking.

At the time, both the Associated Press and United Press International released their final polls before bowl games, and Alabama was the national champion in both, even though the Crimson Tide lost to Southwest Conference runner-up Texas in the Orange Bowl game, 21-17.

So the Football Writers voted Arkansas national champion.

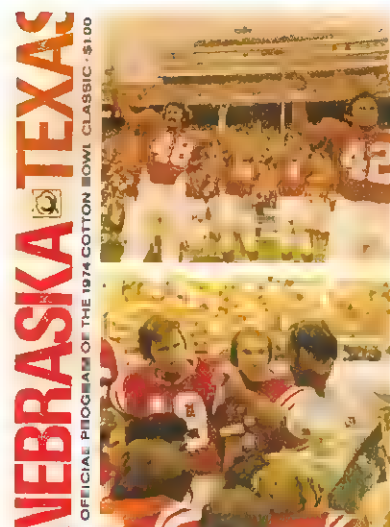
Nebraska's defense, led by end Langston Coleman, gave the Razorback offense all it could handle. Arkansas managed only 45 yards rushing. But the Razorback defense, which had shut out five consecutive opponents, was similarly stingy, allowing the Cornhuskers only a second-quarter touchdown.

Sophomore halfback Harry Wilson, who finished with 84 rushing yards on 12 carries, capped the 69-yard touchdown drive from 1 yard out for a lead Nebraska held until late in the game. Arkansas quarterback Fred Marshall directed an 80-yard drive to the winning touchdown.

Broyles' assistant coaches included Barry Switzer and Johnny Majors and his team, considered among the best in school history, included Jimmy Johnson and Jerry Jones. Switzer and Johnson are the only two football coaches to win both college national championships and Super Bowls.

Nebraska's captains in 1964 were center Lyle Sittler and halfback Bobby Hohn. Sittler was a first-team all-conference selection as were ends Tony Jeter and Freeman White, defensive backs Ted Vactor and Kent McCloughan, middle guard Walt Barnes and tackle Larry Kramer, an All-American.

The NCAA's substitution rules were liberalized in 1964, allowing for two-platoon play.



Jan. 1, 1974
Nebraska 19, Texas 3

Nebraska	0	3	13	3	—	19
Texas	3	0	0	0	—	3

Attendance: 67,500 (est. 20,000 Nebraskans)

First Quarter
UT Bill Schott 22 field goal, 9:30

Second Quarter
NU Rich Sanger 24 field goal, 9:05

Third Quarter
NU Ritch Bahe 12 run (Sanger kick), 3:05
NU Tony Davis 3 run (kick blocked), 1:23

Fourth Quarter
NU Sanger 43 field goal, 8:09

The coaching transition from Bob Devaney to Tom Osborne was relatively seamless. The Cornhuskers' record in Osborne's first season was the same as the record in Devaney's last season, 9-2-1. And that was despite the departures of several outstanding players, among them Heisman Trophy winner Johnny Rodgers and Outland Trophy and Lombardi Award winner Rich Glover. Even so, there were glitches. Practices were longer under Osborne, and the team scrimmaged more often.

John Dutton, a senior co-captain, spoke out late in the season, claiming, on the record, that the coaches might need 2 1/2-hour practices to teach something but the players didn't need that much time to learn it. He also objected to the scrimmage schedule and missed two bowl practices as a result.

Osborne relented, however, reinstating the All-America defensive tackle.

Texas was making a sixth consecutive Cotton Bowl appearance as Southwest Conference champion. The Longhorns' innovative Wishbone-T offense featured All-America fullback Roosevelt Leaks, who rushed for a SWC-record 1,415 yards and finished third in voting for the Heisman Trophy.

The Blackshirts limited Leaks to 48 yards rushing, and defensive end Steve Manstedt set up Nebraska's first points by returning a Leaks fumble 65 yards to the Texas 8-yard

line. The Cornhuskers were forced to settle for a field goal, however, and the score was tied at halftime.

Nebraska could have taken the lead just before intermission. The Cornhuskers had first-and-goal at the Texas 1-yard line and couldn't get the ball in the end zone on four tries.

The Blackshirts got all of the scoring support they needed late in the third quarter, when wingback Ritch Bahe ran 12 yards on a reverse for a touchdown.

Afterward, Texas coach Darrell Royal visited the Nebraska locker room to congratulate Osborne and his team. The bowl victory was the Cornhuskers' fifth in a row.

Offensive tackle Daryl White also was a co-captain and All-American, recognition he earned in 1972 as well. Dutton, White, Manstedt and split end Frosty Anderson were all-conference honorees.

Jan. 1, 1980

Houston 17, Nebraska 14

Houston	0	7	0	10	—	17
Nebraska	7	0	0	7	—	14

Attendance: 72,032 (13,683 Nebraskans)

First Quarter

NU Jarvis Redwine 9 run (Dean Sukup kick), 5:13

Second Quarter

UH Terry Elston 8 run (Ken Hatfield kick), 12:17

Fourth Quarter

UH Hatfield 41 field goal, 8:25

NU Jeff Finn 6 pass from Jeff Quinn (Sukup kick), 3:56

UH Eric Herring 6 pass from Elston (Hatfield kick), :12



With his offense sputtering, coach Tom Osborne tried to trick Southeast Conference co-champion Houston, which had been a member of the conference only four years and was playing in its third Cotton Bowl. Coach Bill Yeoman's Cougars had lost only once, to Texas.

Osborne called a throwback pass from I-back Jarvis Redwine to quarterback Jeff Quinn, for a 6-yard gain, and a "swinging gate" play on which everyone lined up to the left of center with Quinn scooping the ball to Redwine, who ran behind the heavily over loaded interference.

Officials flagged the play, ruling that Quinn had picked up the ball and tossed it instead of scooping in a continuous motion. Houston was offside, however, meaning the down was played over.

The Cougars, running from Yeoman's veer offense, fumbled seven times, losing three. The third was nearly fatal. Nebraska defensive tackle Bill Barnett recovered at the Houston 31-yard line, setting up a touchdown on a 6-yard pass from Quinn to tight end Jeff Finn, one play after the "swinging gate."

Dean Sukup kicked the extra point for a 14-10 lead with 3:56 remaining.

But Houston's back-up quarterback Terry Elston directed a 66-yard drive, with the winning touchdown coming on a fourth-down pass to Eric Herring with 12 second left. The ball glanced off Cornhusker cornerback Ric Lindquist — or not; Herring claimed it didn't.

In any case, the touchdown pass was Elston's first. The comeback victory was Houston's seventh in 12 games, five of them led by Elston, a junior from Oxford, Ala., who had never started.

Nebraska was plagued by poor field position much of the game, with Tim Smith punting 10 times. Redwine, who had averaged 7 yards per carry in rushing for 1,048 yards during the season, was limited to 58 on 17 carries. Linebacker Kim Baker led the Blackshirts with 12 tackles.

Smith, a split end, and L.C. Cole, a defensive end, were Cornhusker captains in 1979. Tight end Junior Miller earned All-America recognition and first-team all-conference honors, as did Smith, Redwine, Sukup guard John Havekost, defensive end Derrie Nelson, defensive tackle Rod Horn, middle guard Kerry Weinmaster, wingback Kenny Brown and center Kelly Saalfeld. ■

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10 QUESTIONS

with **CARL NICKS**

**6-5/335 Jr. Offensive Lineman
Salinas, Calif.**

Even though he was told to expect it, Carl Nicks was surprised. When he made his recruiting visit to Nebraska, "everyone knew me," he said. "I was just a recruit, and they knew my name, my background, everything. I couldn't walk down the street without some calling my name. It was amazing.

"Different players were telling me, but I didn't believe them. It was like a movie."

Someone his size is difficult to miss, of course. Plus, his reputation preceded him. He was a four-star recruit from Hartnell College, after beginning his college career at New Mexico State.

Despite his credentials, however, he didn't become a starter until sophomore Matt Slauson was sidelined by injury. Nicks played every down against Colorado and Oklahoma. "I had a couple of good weeks of practice, so they (the coaches) felt comfortable putting me in," Nicks said.

Even though Slauson could have played against Oklahoma, Nicks held onto the job. "The coaches make one thing clear: Nothing's going to be handed to you," said Nicks. "You've got to earn everything you get. He (Slauson) can't just go, 'Oh, I'm back. I'm going to start again.'

"He's got to bust his butt like everyone else."

If a teammate came to visit you in Salinas, what would you want to show him?

"I'd take them to the ocean, automatically. I'm like 20 minutes away. Probably take them to the mall. We've actually got a pretty good mall. Take them out to the clubs, I don't know."

If you could eat only one thing for the next month, what would it be?

"I could probably eat my mom's spaghetti. Some people put the sauce on the side. My mom mixes it all up, puts her own spices and different meats in it, beef, sausages. I just love it."

If your life were made into a movie, whom would you pick to play the part of you?

"It would have to be someone halfway big. I'm aggressive but I'm not too violent, Ving Rhames."

If you could spend 30 minutes with a celebrity, sports or otherwise, whom would you pick, and what would you talk about?

"I'd probably pick Orlando Pace. I'd ask him, 'What do you do to be so great?' Because in my eyes, he's the one of the best offensive tackles in the league, and I'd just get advice from him, the tricks of the trade. I've watched him since he was in college. I want to meet him, try to pick his brain. Coach K (Dave Kennedy) used to train him. He said he was just a special athlete, hard worker, really big, really strong, a real good guy."



If you could compete in a sport other than football at the college level, what sport would you pick?

"I'd do the shot put. I did it in high school and junior college. In junior college I threw like 54-8. I had no technique, but I had fun doing it. It's an individual sport. It's real intense but then at the same time . . . I can't explain it. You just get in a zone. You've got to use all your power and force in one split-second. It's kind of like blocking, I guess, you just burst. In junior college, I pretty much just used brute force. But you've got to have technique because these guys are throwing like 68 or 70 feet."

What's the best movie you've seen?

"I just recently saw 'Déjà Vu' with Denzel (Washington). That was a real good movie. But my favorite of all time? It's cheesy, but it's either got to be 'Big Trouble in Little China' or 'The Lost Boys.' For some reason I just like those old movies. 'Big Trouble in Little China,' I used to drive my mom crazy. We'd have a tape of it, and I'd watch it, and as soon as it was over, I'd rewind it and watch it again."

What's the best thing served at the training table?

"Probably steak, any kind of steak, really, all their cuts are pretty good. They'll probably have it one or two times a week. Medium well, it's got to be a little cooked."

Who's the funniest guy on the team?

"Barry Cryer, he's always funny. We could be in a serious situation, and Barry will just pop a joke off. You don't want to laugh. You're trying to be serious. But it's just funny, and you have to. We'll do field goal, and he'll make a joke right before the ball is snapped. We'll go hard, but he'll still be joking."

When you cook for yourself, what's your specialty?

"Breakfast, omelets, pancakes, waffles. Omelets, with everything, bacon, sausage, peppers, onions, anything I've got. That's my strength. Omelets are pretty much my specialty. I used to watch my mom. She was like, 'Well, you can pretty much cook it yourself.' Me, I always look at it and can kind of tell when to flip it. It's just technique."

Jessica Simpson or Paris Hilton?

"Jessica Simpson, she's more attractive to me than Paris. But I might pick Jessica over a lot of people." ■

Oklahoma 21 Nebraska 7

Oklahoma defensive end C.J. Ah You sacks Nebraska quarterback Zac Taylor for a 6-yard loss. (Photo by Scott Bruhn)



There for the Taking

*Turnovers keep NU
from cashing in
on opportunities*

By Mike Babcock

Photos: Scott Bruhn

Say what you want, the Big 12 championship was Nebraska's for the taking. And that's no disrespect to Oklahoma, which did what the Cornhuskers couldn't do — earn it.

"You gotta give credit to Oklahoma," coach Bill Callahan said afterward. "They played a heck of a game. We just couldn't answer when we had to answer. They played terrifically."

Nebraska still could have won, despite spotting the Sooners seven points just 48 seconds into the game and trailing 14-0 going into the second quarter. It could have won had it not turned over the ball an uncharacteristic five times, including twice in scoring situations in the fourth quarter.

Credit Oklahoma for causing the turnovers, of course. But the opportunities were there.

For Cornhusker quarterback Zac Taylor the game offered a storybook scenario. The senior from Norman, Okla., was named the Big 12 Offensive Player of the Year during the week before the game, after a Texas A&M upset of Texas sent Oklahoma instead of the Longhorns to Kansas City.

The setting was appropriate, too, a sellout crowd of 80,031, three-fourths of it in Nebraska red, chilled by North Division weather. The temperature was 28 degrees at kickoff.

If the weather was a factor (and that's not to say it was), however, Oklahoma seemed to adapt better than the Cornhuskers, given their five-to-one disparity in turnovers.

In any case, the story of the game wasn't what the Nebraska faithful wanted.

Taylor refused to concede the ending until a final incomplete pass from the Oklahoma 35-yard line with 21 seconds remaining. The Cornhuskers had taken possession at the Sooner 49 with 2:02 on the clock. "You score there, get the



Oklahoma defensive back Nic Harris (5) makes a diving interception in front of Nebraska receiver Nate Swift (87).

Big 12 Championship

ball back, you still have a chance," he said. "As long as you've got the ball and it's only a two-possession game, you've always got to feel like you've got a chance to win."

"If we can just come up with a big play, get a touchdown somehow, it's all luck then, kick the onside and pray that something happens. I've seen crazier comebacks than that. So I still had hope there."

Nebraska wouldn't have needed craziness had it executed earlier, in the fourth quarter alone.

Its first possession of the period, which began in the third quarter, carried to the Oklahoma 16-yard line before ending with an incomplete pass on fourth-and-1.

Its second possession ended at the Sooner 20-yard line, with an interception.

And its third possession ended at the Oklahoma 31-yard line, also with an interception.

Either of the Taylor passes could have produced touchdowns. Nate Swift was open in the end zone on the first, and Terrence Nunn was behind the defenders in the end zone on the second.

"I think if I'd have put that on a line, Swift catches that,"



Taylor said of the first.

Sooner safety Nic Harris caught the ball instead. "When I lob it up, I give him an opportunity to go make that play. That's one I'd definitely love to have back," Taylor said.

Nebraska would have loved to have other plays back, as well, such as the 66-yard touchdown pass from Paul Thompson to Malcolm Kelly in the first quarter, and a 35-yard, Thompson-to-Jermaine-Gresham pass in the third quarter, on third-and-10 from the Oklahoma 1-yard line.

Thompson would complete five more passes during that possession, the last a 3-yarder to Kelly for a touchdown. The drive covered 99 yards on 11 plays and gave the Sooners breathing room.

All but six of the Cornhuskers' second-half snaps were on Oklahoma's side of the 50-yard line, three in each quarter. But "we didn't capitalize on the short field," Callahan said.

Taylor credited the Sooners. "We lost to a great team," he said. "I'll give them that."

Nevertheless, the title was there for the taking. And that was frustrating.

"Any time you play in a championship (game), you come in expecting to win and expecting to celebrate after the game," said Taylor. "When it doesn't happen, it's disappointing."

"It's just tough because you don't want to lose championship games." ■

REPORT CARD

RUSHING OFFENSE

Nebraska rushed for twice as many yards as Oklahoma, but that wasn't saying much. Jackson averaged 5.4 yards per carry before leaving the game with a broken hand. But his average was distorted by a 31-yard run, on his second carry - after gaining 10 yards on his first. As with other aspects of the offense, "we didn't get it done. We didn't play good enough," said Callahan. Circumstances (i.e. the 14-0 first-quarter deficit) forced the Cornhuskers away from the running game and into the air ★★

PASSING OFFENSE

Taylor had thrown only four interceptions in 315 attempts during the regular season. He was intercepted three times, including on consecutive drives in the fourth quarter. The responsibility wasn't only on him, however. He was sacked three times and took a physical pounding. "That's what happens when you play Oklahoma," Taylor said. "They're a great blitzing team." ★★

RUSHING DEFENSE

Oklahoma was ranked 14th nationally in rushing. But Nebraska shut down the Sooner running game, allowing 42 yards on 28 carries, an average of 1.5 yards per carry. "That was one of our main focuses. I thought we did a great job stuffing them up there," said defensive end Jay Moore. ★★

PASSING DEFENSE

The Cornhuskers had Oklahoma third-and-10 at its own 1-yard line in the third quarter, only to allow Paul Thompson to complete a 35-yard pass to tight end Jermaine Gresham to initiate a 99-yard touchdown drive. The Sooners' second touchdown came on a 66-yard pass from Thompson to Malcolm Kelly, who finished with 10 receptions for 142 yards and two touchdowns. ★★

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Sooners' Reggie Smith returned the kickoff following Nebraska's lone touchdown 37 yards but to no avail as the Cornhuskers forced a punt. And Nebraska's punt-return game still left something to be desired. Even so, the Cornhuskers held their own on special teams. ★★

NUMBERS

3

Nebraska was considerably less prone to turnovers going into the game. But the Cornhuskers committed five to Oklahoma's one, an Andrew Shanle interception. On the game's first play from scrimmage, wide receiver Maurice Purify caught a Zac Taylor pass and fumbled the ball away. The Sooners recovered at the Nebraska 2-yard line and scored on the next play.

NEBRASKA-OKLAHOMA NOTES

TOUCH OF CLASS

Oklahoma coach Bob Stoops talked with the Cornhuskers' Zac Taylor on the field after the game, complimenting him on a "great season," said Taylor, the Big 12 Offensive Player of the Year.

The encouragement "was just kind of a small gesture, just to, maybe, make me feel a little better," Taylor said. "There's a lot of respect between both teams and both coaches.

"Everything I know about him, he's a good guy."

NOT THE FIRST CHOICE

Nebraska's second-quarter touchdown was set up by Andrew Shanle's fourth interception of the season, which gave the Cornhuskers the ball at the Oklahoma 23-yard line. On the third play, Taylor passed to tight end Hunter Teafatiller for 14 yards and the score.

Teafatiller's responsibility on the play was to "run the safety off," Taylor said. "But the safety went with the corner route, so 'Teaf' was wide-open and threw up his hands to let me know he was there. I just tried to give him a ball he could catch, and it worked out for us."

The catch was Teafatiller's fifth of the season, and fourth for a touchdown.

QUICK STRIKE

Two of Oklahoma's first three offensive "series" were one play. The first, on the game's second scrimmage snap, was a Patrick Allen touchdown from 2 yards out and the second, on the Sooners' third possession, was a 66-yard touchdown pass from Paul Thompson to Malcolm Kelly.

With 5:35 remaining in the first quarter, Oklahoma led 14-0.

Even so, Nebraska was optimistic at halftime, "knowing you're down 14-7 and you haven't played your best half of football," said Taylor. "So we still thought we'd get a lot of opportunities. We thought we'd bounce back. It just didn't go our way."

IT CAME TO PASS

As always, Nebraska's offensive game plan was to balance run and pass. But the Cornhuskers were forced out of the plan because of Oklahoma's 14 first-quarter points.

Taylor threw a season-high 50 passes, completing 23 with three interceptions. His previous high for attempts this season was 39 against Oklahoma State. His career high as a Cornhusker was 55 against Iowa State last season. He was 25-of-45 for 249 yards and two touchdowns with two interceptions against Oklahoma last season, in a 31-24 loss at Memorial Stadium.

"We probably didn't intend to throw the ball as many times as we did," Taylor said. "But they (Sooners) did a great job. They prepared for our run."

The 50 passes tied a Big 12 championship game record, set by Oklahoma's Jason White in 2003. The teams' combined 85 passes were a title game record, while their combined 49 rushing attempts were a record low. Nebraska limited Oklahoma to a season-low 42 yards rushing. The Sooners' previous low was 124 yards in a loss to Texas.

Thompson threw a career-high 34 passes, completing 19 for 265 yards and two touchdowns.

MORE RECORDS

Not surprisingly, Nebraska's five turnovers were the most in a Big 12 title game. Oklahoma's touchdown following the first of those turnovers, wide receiver Maurice Purify's fumble, was the fastest in championship game history. Just 48 seconds had elapsed when the Sooners scored.

Oklahoma's Kelly set Big 12 championship records for receptions in a game (10) and a half (six) and tied records for receiving yards in a half (102) and touchdown catches (two). "Their receivers were exceptional," Cornhusker coach Bill Callahan said. "We just didn't match up real well."

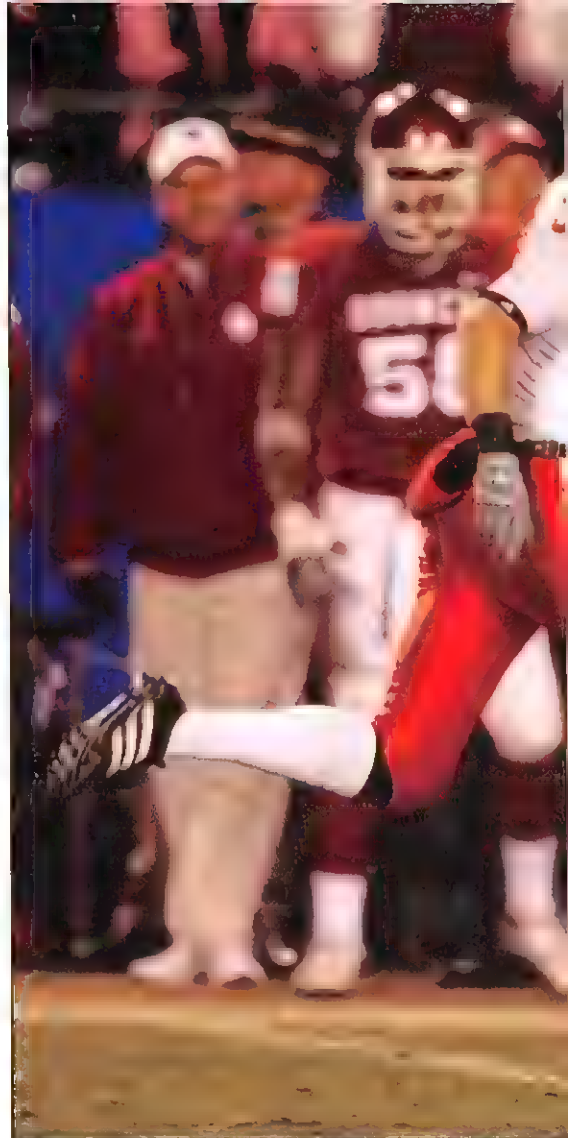
STATISTICALLY SPEAKING

Cornhusker punter Dan Titchener's six punts inside the 20 were a Big 12 championship game record. They were twice as many as the previous record, set by Oklahoma's Blake Ferguson in 2003.

Wide receiver Terrence Nunn caught four passes for 37 yards. The junior from Houston has caught at least one pass in 26 consecutive games, the second-longest streak in school history.

I-back Brandon Jackson rushed for 70 yards before leaving the game with a broken hand. The junior from Horn Lake, Miss., has 951 rushing yards for the season. Jackson also was Nebraska's leading receiver with five catches. He caught six passes in the previous game and has 31 for the season.

Going into the game, Nebraska was among the nation's best at converting on third down (48 percent). But the Cornhuskers converted on only 3-of-15 third downs, including 1-of-8 in the first half. ■



Wide receiver Todd Peterson gains 48 yards on a second



An interception by safety Andrew Shanle (8, left) set the (89, right), receiving congratulations from tight ends coa

Who Stood Out?

OFFENSE

Brandon Jackson did what he could before leaving the game midway through the third quarter. He rushed for 70 yards, caught five passes for 28 yards and returned two kickoffs for 36 yards. Marlon Lucky, who had been bothered by back problems, didn't see much action, and he didn't get a carry, but he caught a pair of passes for 44 yards in the fourth quarter as the Cornhuskers tried in vain to come back.



Brandon Jackson

DEFENSE

Middle linebacker Corey McKeon was the game's leading tackler with eight, including one for loss. He also broke up a pass. Moore and defensive tackle Barry Cryer each were credited with two tackles for losses. Moore had the Cornhuskers' only sack. Linebacker Steve Octavien nearly tackled running back Chris Brown for a safety on second down on the third-quarter possession that became Oklahoma's 99-yard touchdown drive. "We let them out of the hole," said Callahan.



Corey McKeon

SPECIAL TEAMS

Dan Titchener's 40-yard punt was downed at the Oklahoma 1-yard line late in the third quarter, providing the Cornhuskers with a golden opportunity — which turned to something else. Titchener averaged only 34.1 yards on his seven punts, but six of them were downed inside the 20, including two inside the 10. That allowed Nebraska to have good field position. "We had the short field in the third quarter several times, and their defense was just too stingy," Callahan said.



Dan Titchener

INJURY REPORT

Cornhusker I-back Brandon Jackson suffered a broken hand in the second half. He'll wear a cast and then a splint but should be able to play in the Cotton Bowl, according to coach Bill Callahan.

Offensive linemen Matt Slauson and Greg Austin didn't play in the game, although they apparently could have. "We just elected to play the two other guys in the best interests of the team," Callahan said, referring to Carl Nicks, at right tackle, and Mike Huff, at right guard.



quarter pass play from the Nebraska 4.



stage for NU's only touchdown, a 14-yard pass to tight end Hunter Teafatiller ch Shawn Watson.



GAME STATS

SCORING

Dec. 2, 2006

Arrowhead Stadium Kansas City, Mo.
Attendance 80,031

	1	2	3	4	F
Nebraska	0	7	0	0	7
Oklahoma	14	0	7	0	21

First Quarter

	NU	OU
OU Patrick 2-yard Run (Hartley Kick) 14:12	0	7
Drive: 1 plays 2 yds 0:12		

	NU	OU
OU Kelly Pass from Thompson 66-yards (Hartley Kick) 05:35	0	14
Drive: 1 plays 66 yds 0:32		

Second Quarter

	NU	OU
NU Teafatiller Pass from Taylor 14-yards (Congdon Kick) 04:37	7	14
Drive: 3 plays 23 yds 0:33		

Third Quarter

	NU	OU
OU Kelly Pass from Thompson 3-yards (Hartley Kick) 01:25	7	21
Drive: 11 plays 99 yds 3:21		

TEAM STATS

	NU	OU
Total First Downs	17	13
Rushing	6	2
Passing	11	11
Penalty	0	0
Rushing Attempts	21	28
Yards Gained Rushing	100	68
Yards Lost Rushing	16	26
Net Yards Rushing	84	42
Net Yards Passing	282	265
Passes Attempted	50	35
Passes Completed	23	19
Had Intercepted	3	1
Percent Completion	46.0%	54.3%
Yards per Attempt	5.6	7.6
Yards per Completion	12.3	13.9
Total Offensive Plays	71	63
Total Net Yards	366	307
Avg. Gain Per Play	5.2	4.9
Fumbles: No-Lost	3-2	2-0
Penalties: No-Yards	5-24	3-25
Punts: No-Yards	7-239	9-330
Avg. Per Punt	34.1	36.7
Avg. Net Punt	34.1	36.3
Punt Returns: No-Yards	3-3	2-0
Kickoff Returns: No-Yards	3-49	2-50
Interception Returns: No-Yds	1-0	3-4
Fumble Returns: No-Yards	0-0	1-8
Miscellaneous Yards	0	0
Possession Time	28:21	31:39
Third-Down Conversions	3-15	4-15
Percentage	20.0%	26.7%
Fourth-Down Conversions	1-3	0-1
Percentage	33.3%	0.0%
Sacks By: No-Yards	1-6	3-13

PLAY CHART

	(No. of Plays)	NU	OU
Yards			
(-) Yards	7	5	
0-5 Yards	40	45	
6-9 Yards	6	7	
10-19 Yards	7	9	
20-29 Yards	1	2	
30-39 Yards	1	2	
40-49 Yards	0	1	
50 or more Yards	1	0	



Nebraska's Andre Jones (25), Bo Ruud (51) and Andrew Shanle (8) combine to spill Oklahoma wide receiver Manuel Johnson.

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

NEBRASKA

	No	Gain	Lost	Net	Avg	TD	Lg
Jackson	13	71	1	70	5.4	0	31
Taylor	7	29	13	16	2.3	0	14
Wilson	1	0	2	-2	-2.0	0	0
Total	21	100	16	84	4.0	0	31

	Att	Comp	%	Int	Yds	TD	Lg
Taylor	50	23	46.0	3	282	1	48
Total	50	23	46.0	3	282	1	48

	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Peterson	2	72	0	48
Lucky	2	44	0	31
Nunn	4	37	0	13
Purify	3	37	0	23
Jackson	5	28	0	7
Wilson	3	20	0	13
Swift	1	18	0	18
Teafatiller	1	14	1	14
Phillips	1	7	0	7
Erickson	1	5	0	5
Total	23	282	1	48

	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Grixby	3	3	0	4
Total	3	3	0	4

	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Jackson	2	36	0	27
Todd	1	13	0	13
Total	3	49	0	27

	No	Avg	Lg	Blk	TB	FC	50+	In 20
Titchener	7	34.1	40	0	0	4	0	6
Total	7	34.1	40	0	0	4	0	6

	Solo	Asst	Tot	TFL	Sack	PD	FF	FR
McKeon	7	2	9	1-1	0-0	1	0	0
Grixby	7	0	7	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Jones	6	1	7	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Shanle	4	1	5	0-0	0-0	2	0	0
Cryer	3	1	4	2-7	0-0	0	0	0
Dagunduro	3	1	4	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Moore	3	0	3	2-10	1-6	0	0	0
Octavien	3	0	3	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Bradley	2	0	2	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Ruud	2	0	2	0-0	0-0	1	0	0
Steinkuhler	1	1	2	1-3	0-0	0	0	0
Brandenburg	1	0	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Culbert	1	0	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Green	1	0	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Henry	1	0	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Nunn	0	1	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Phillips	1	0	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Thenarse	0	1	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Turner	0	1	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0

INTERCEPTION RETURNS

	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Shanle	1	0	0	0
Total	1	0	0	0

OKLAHOMA

	No	Gain	Lost	Net	Avg	TD	Lg
Patrick	15	41	6	35	2.3	1	11
Brown	7	12	8	4	0.6	0	9
Thompson	5	15	11	4	0.8	0	8
Gutierrez	1	0	1	-1	-1.0	0	0
Total	28	68	26	42	1.5	1	11

	Att	Comp	%	Int	Yds	TD	Lg
Thompson	34	19	55.9	1	265	2	66
McEachern	1	0	0.0	0	0	0	0
Total	35	19	54.3	1	265	2	66

	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Kelly	10	142	2	66
Johnson	5	47	0	15
Gresham	1	35	0	35
Iglesias	2	26	0	22
Tennell	1	15	0	15
Total	19	265	2	66

	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Smith	2	0	0	0
Total	2	0	0	0

	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Smith	2	50	0	37
Total	2	50	0	37

	No	Avg	Lg	Blk	TB	FC	50+	In 20
Cohen	9	36.7	47	0	0	3	0	1
Total	9	36.7	47	0	0	3	0	1

	Solo	Asst	Tot	TFL	Sack	PD	FF	FR
Latimer	5	2	7	0-0	0-0	3	0	0
Alexander	6	0	6	0-0	0-0	0	0	1
Lofton	5	0	5	1-1	0-0	0	0	0
Williams	4	1	5	0-0	0-0	1	0	0
Smith	3	1	4	1-2	0-0	0	0	1
Ah You	3	0	3	1-5	1-5	0	1	0
Baker	3	0	3	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Harris	2	1	3	1-6	1-6	2	0	0
Walker	3	0	3	0-0	0-0	1	1	0
Eldridge	1	1	2	0-0	0-0	0	0	0
Holmes	2	0	2	0-0	0-0	1	0	0

	No	Yds	TD	Lg
Wolfe	1	4	0	4
Harris	1	0	0	0
Smith	1	0	0	0
Total	3	4	0	4

2006 SEASON STATS

RUSHING

	G	No	Gain	Lost	Net	Avg	TD	Lg	Yd/G
Jackson, Brandon	13	181	984	33	951	5.3	7	48	73.2
Lucky, Marlon	13	116	666	26	640	5.5	6	51	49.2
Glenn, Cody	9	71	375	5	370	5.2	8	36	41.1
Wilson, Kenny	12	75	354	19	335	4.5	4	30	27.9
Nunn, Terrence	13	3	21	0	21	7.0	0	18	1.6
Hardy, Frantz	12	3	16	2	14	4.7	0	13	1.2
Green, Tierre	13	1	7	0	7	7.0	0	7	0.5
Purify, Maurice	13	1	1	0	1	1.0	0	1	0.1
Ganz, Joe	5	3	10	20	-10	-3.3	0	10	-2.0
Taylor, Zac	13	56	150	177	-27	-0.5	1	24	-2.1

PASSING

	G	Att	Comp	%	Int	Yds	TD	Lg	Yd/G
Taylor, Zac	13	365	219	60.0	7	3071	25	78	236.2
Ganz, Joe	5	13	7	53.8	0	122	3	31	24.4
Purify, Maurice	13	1	1	100.0	0	28	1	28	2.2
Titchener, Dan	13	1	1	100.0	0	28	0	28	2.2
Lucky, Marlon	13	2	1	50.0	0	25	1	25	1.9
Wesch, Jake	10	1	1	100.0	0	17	1	17	1.7

RECEIVING

	G	No	Yds	Avg	TD	Lg	Yd/G
Purify, Maurice	13	33	821	18.8	7	63	47.8
Nunn, Terrence	13	41	589	14.4	3	75	45.3
Swift, Nate	13	19	330	17.4	1	49	25.4
Jackson, Brandon	13	31	319	10.3	2	49	24.5
Hardy, Frantz	12	14	317	22.6	3	78	26.4
Lucky, Marlon	13	26	316	12.2	0	42	24.3
Peterson, Todd	13	19	307	16.2	2	48	23.6
Herian, Matt	13	12	150	12.5	2	38	11.5
Erickson, Dan	13	4	85	21.2	0	57	6.5
Phillips, J.B.	13	13	82	6.3	2	10	6.3
Teafatiller, Hunter	13	5	78	15.6	4	29	6.0
Turner, Barry	13	1	29	29.0	1	29	2.2
Mueller, Josh	12	5	26	5.2	2	8	2.2
Wilson, Kenny	12	3	20	6.7	0	13	1.7
Senske, Matt	4	2	13	6.5	1	12	3.2
Todd, Dane	13	2	9	4.5	1	8	0.7

PUNT RETURNS LEADERS

	G	No	Yds	Avg	TD	Lg	Yd/G
Nunn, Terrence	13	18	153	8.5	0	31	11.8
Grixby, Courtney	13	12	69	5.8	0	16	5.3

KICKOFF RETURNS LEADERS

	G	No	Yds	Avg	TD	Lg	Yd/G
Jackson, Brandon	13	9	157	17.4	0	27	12.1
Lucky, Marlon	13	6	113	18.8	0	32	8.7
Green, Tierre	13	3	59	19.7	0	23	4.5
Hardy, Frantz	12	3	49	16.3	0	22	4.1
Wilson, Kenny	12	2	42	21.0	0	27	3.5

PUNTING

	G	No	Avg	Lg	Blk	FC	50+	In	20
Titchener, Dan	13	61	39.1	58	0	2	27	5	24
Congdon, Jordan	13	1	35.0	35	0	0	0	0	1

FIELD GOALS

	G	Att	Made	Lg	Blkd
Congdon, Jordan	13	7	5	40	0

DEFENSE LEADERS

	G	Tack	Ass	Tot	TFL	Sack	PD	FF	FR
Bradley, Stewart	13	37	32	69	2-12	0-0	1	2	3
Jones, Andre	13	47	22	69	0-1	0-0	7	0	0
McKeon, Corey	12	29	35	64	4-25	1-15	3	1	1
Green, Tierre	13	35	27	62	0-1	0-0	2	0	1
Ruud, Bo	13	34	28	62	4-31	2-23	3	3	1
Shanley, Andrew	13	39	16	55	0-0	0-0	6	0	1
Grixby, Courtney	13	39	11	50	1-3	0-0	10	1	1
Carriker, Adam	13	21	27	48	11-52	6-36	3	0	0
Brandenburgh, L	13	18	21	39	2-7	0-1	0	1	0
Moore, Jay	13	19	20	39	11-66	5-39	3	0	0

TEAM STATISTICS

	NU	OPP
Total First Downs	268	224
Rushing	119	77
Passing	138	138
Penalty	13	9
Total Net Yards	5574	4468
Total Plays	900	826
Yards Per Play	6.2	5.4
Yards Per Game	428.8	343.7
Rushing Attempts-Yards	516-2283	401-1565
Yards Per Attempt	4.4	3.9
Yards Per Game	175.6	120.4
Pass Att.-Comp.-Int.	384-230-7	425-228-12
Passing Yards	3291	2903
Yards Per Completion	14.3	12.7
Yards Per Game	253.2	223.3
Punting: No.-Avg.	62-39.0	77-40.0
Fumbles-Lost	24-16	30-11
Penalties-Yards	70-569	71-538
Sacks By-Yds. Lost	26-206	28-197
Third-Down Conversions	85-185	59-180
Conversion Pct.	45.9	32.8
Fourth-Down Conversions	14-21	9-23
Conversion Pct.	66.7	39.1
Avg. Time Of Possession	32:40	27:20

Scoring	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	OT	TOT
Nebraska	110	128	49	120	7	414
Opponents	38	76	43	82	0	239

2006 RESULTS, SCHEDULE

1	Sept. 2	Louisiana Tech (3-9), W 49-10	1-0
2	Sept. 9	Nicholls State (4-7), W 56-7	2-0
3	Sept. 16	@USC (10-2), L 28-10	2-1
4	Sept. 23	Troy (7-5), W 56-0	3-1
5	Sept. 30	Kansas (6-6), W 39-32 (OT)	4-1
6	Oct. 7	@Iowa State (4-8), W 28-14	5-1
7	Oct. 14	@Kansas State (7-5), W 21-3	6-1
8	Oct. 21	Texas (9-3), L 22-20	6-2
9	Oct. 28	@Oklahoma State (6-6), L 41-29	6-3
10	Nov. 4	Missouri (8-4), W 34-20	7-3
11	Nov. 11	@Texas A&M (9-3), W 28-27	8-3
12	Nov. 24	Colorado (2-10), W 37-14	9-3
13	Dec. 2	vs. Oklahoma (11-2), L 21-7	9-4
14	Jan. 1	vs. Auburn (16-2), 10:40 a.m., Fox	

SCOUTING REPORT

GAME 14

Auburn Jan. 1

Location: Auburn, Ala.

Enrollment: 23,547

2006 record: 10-2

Coch: Tommy Tuberville,
eighth year

Series: Nebraska leads 3-0

10:40 a.m. (CST), Fox
Cotton Bowl, Dallas, Texas

Quick Facts

Auburn has posted a record of 32-5 (.865) since the start of the 2004 season, tying the Tigers for the third-best record in the NCAA over the past three seasons.

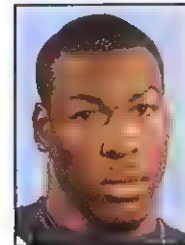
The Tigers own wins over current

No. 2 Florida (27-17) and current No. 4 LSU (7-3). Their losses were to Arkansas (27-10) and Georgia (37-15).

Senior kicker John Vaughn was named the SEC Special Teams Player of the Year after kicking 19 field goals, including 52- and 55-yarders.

Tiger to Watch

Senior Kenny Irons earned first-team All-SEC honors at running back from the coaches for the second straight season after ranking third in the SEC, averaging 82.1 yards per game. Irons rushed for 821 and four touchdowns in 10 games, including 100-yard rushing games against Washington State, South Carolina and Ole Miss.



BIG 12 BOWL SCHEDULE

Thursday, Dec. 28

Independence Bowl, Shreveport, La.

Oklahoma State (6-6) vs. Alabama (6-6), 3:30 p.m., ESPN

Texas Bowl, Houston, Texas

Kansas State (7-5) vs. Rutgers (10-2), 7 p.m., NFL Network

Holiday Bowl, San Diego, Calif.

Texas A&M (9-3) vs. California (9-3), 7 p.m., ESPN

Friday, Dec. 29

Sun Bowl, El Paso, Texas

Missouri (8-4) vs. Oregon State (9-4), 1 p.m., CBS

Insight Bowl, Tempe, Ariz.

Texas Tech (7-5) vs. Minnesota (6-6), 6:30 p.m., NFL Network

Sat., Dec. 30

Alamo Bowl, San Antonio, Texas

Texas (9-3) vs. Iowa (6-6), 3:30 p.m., ESPN

Monday, Jan. 1

Cotton Bowl, Dallas, Texas

Nebraska (9-4) vs. Auburn (10-2), 10:30 a.m., Fox

Fiesta Bowl, Glendale, Ariz.

Oklahoma (11-2) vs. Boise State (12-0), 7:30 p.m., Fox

TENTATIVE 2-DEEPS

NEBRASKA OFFENSE

WR	16	Maurice Purify	11	100	100
WR	17	Nate Swift	11	100	100
WR	18	Chris Patrick	11	100	100
WR	19	Lydon Murtha	11	100	100
WR	20	Andy Christensen	11	100	100
WR	21	Jacob Hickman	11	100	100
WR	22	Brett Byford	11	100	100
WR	23	Kurt Mann	11	100	100
WR	24	Mike Huff	11	100	100
WR	25	Matt Slauson	11	100	100
WR	26	Carl Nicks	11	100	100
WR	27	Matt Slauson	11	100	100
WR	28	Matt Herlan	11	100	100
WR	29	Josh Mueller	11	100	100
WR	30	Terrence Nune	11	100	100
WR	31	Todd Peterson	11	100	100
WR	32	Zac Taylor	11	100	100
WR	33	Joe Ganz	11	100	100
WR	34	Dane Todd	11	100	100
WR	35	Matt Senske	11	100	100
WR	36	Brandon Jackson	11	100	100
WR	37	Marlon Lucky	11	100	100
WR	38	Jordan Congdon	11	100	100

NEBRASKA DEFENSE

DE	44	Jay Moore	11	100	100
DE	45	Barry Turner	11	100	100
DE	46	Ola Dagunduro	11	100	100
DE	47	Ndemukong Suh	11	100	100
DE	48	Barry Cryer	11	100	100
DE	49	Ty Steinkuhler	11	100	100
DE	50	Adam Carriker	11	100	100
DE	51	Zach Potter	11	100	100
DE	52	Stewart Bradley	11	100	100
DE	53	Clayton Slevas	11	100	100
DE	54	Corey McKeon	11	100	100
DE	55	Lance Brandenburg	11	100	100
DE	56	Bo Rudd	11	100	100
DE	57	Steve Octavien	11	100	100
DE	58	Andre Jones	11	100	100
DE	59	Rickey Tenhase	11	100	100
DE	60	Tierre Green	11	100	100
DE	61	Major Culbert	11	100	100
DE	62	Andrew Shanley	11	100	100
DE	63	Bryan Wilson	11	100	100
DE	64	Cortney Grixby	11	100	100
DE	65	Corey Young	11	100	100
DE	66	Dan Titchener	11	100	100

AUBURN OFFENSE

WR	20	Roderique Smith	11	100	100
WR	21	Prechas Rodriguez	11	100	100
WR	22	King Dunlap	11	100	100
WR	23	Oscar Gonzalez	11	100	100
WR	24	Ben Grubbs	11	100	100
WR	25	Wayne Green	11	100	100
WR	26	Joe Cooper	11	100	100
WR	27	Jason Bosley	11	100	100
WR	28	Jim Duckworth	11	100	100
WR	29	Mike Berry	11	100	100
WR	30	Jonathan Palmer	11	100	100
WR	31	Leon Hart	11	100	100
WR	32	Tommy Irons	11	100	100
WR	33	Gabe McKenzie	11	100	100
WR	34	Cortney Taylor	11	100	100
WR	35	Montez Billings	11	100	100
WR	36	Brandon Cox	11	100	100
WR	37	Bleke Field	11	100	100
WR	38	Kenny Irons	11	100	100
WR	39	Brad Lester	11	100	100
WR	40	Carl Stewart	11	100	100
WR	41	Ira Smith	11	100	100
WR	42	John Vaughn	11	100	100

AUBURN DEFENSE

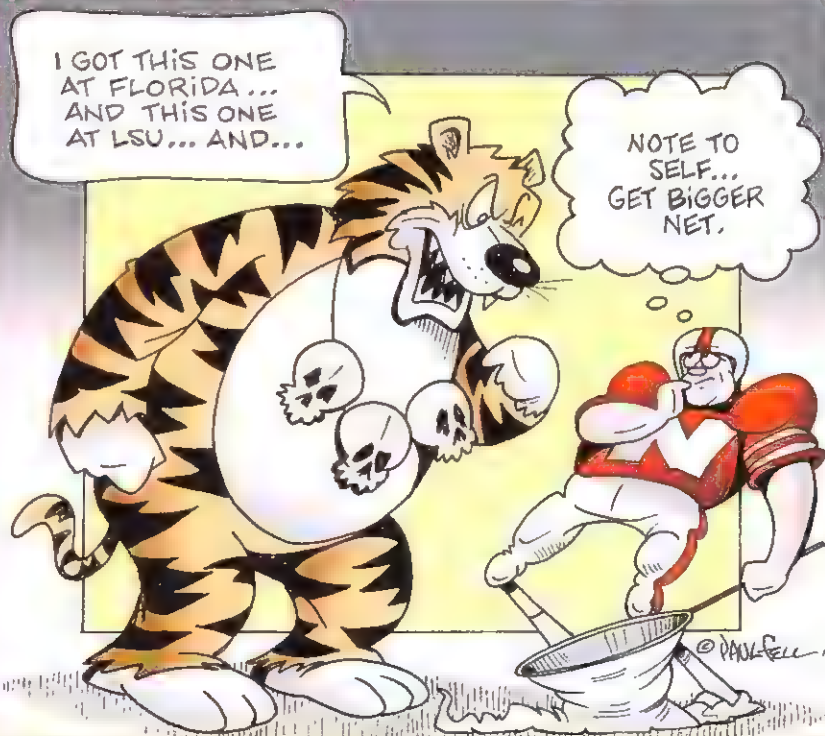
DE	48	Marques Gunn	11	100	100
DE	49	Chris Browder	11	100	100
DE	50	Josh Thompson	11	100	100
DE	51	Tex Doolittle	11	100	100
DE	52	Sen'Derrick Marks	11	100	100
DE	53	Pat Sims	11	100	100
DE	54	Quentin Groves	11	100	100
DE	55	Antonio Coleman	11	100	100
DE	56	Will Herring	11	100	100
DE	57	Steve Gandy	11	100	100
DE	58	Karibi Dede	11	100	100
DE	59	Kevin Sears	11	100	100
DE	60	Tray Blackmon	11	100	100
DE	61	Merrill Johnson	11	100	100
DE	62	David Irons	11	100	100
DE	63	Zach Gilbert	11	100	100
DE	64	Eric Brock	11	100	100
DE	65	Tristan Davis	11	100	100
DE	66	Aaron Savage	11	100	100
DE	67	Jerraud Power	11	100	100
DE	68	Jonathan Wilhite	11	100	100
DE	69	Patrick Lee	11	100	100
DE	70	Kody Bliss	11	100	100

THE PAUL FELL PREDICTION

NEBRASKA

vs.

AUBURN



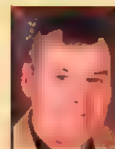
JANUARY 1, 2007
TIGER DEFENSE MAY BE TOUGHEST WE'VE FACED ALL YEAR. HUSKERS NEED AN A+ GRADE ON COTTON BOWL FINAL EXAM!

PICKS

Jan. 1-8



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G.I. Independent



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Husker Sports Network
(Guest)

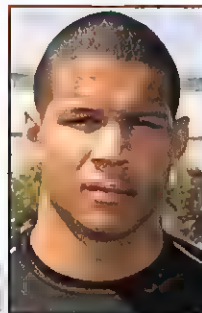
Nebraska vs. Auburn	Auburn 27, Nebraska 24	Auburn 20, Nebraska 17	Nebraska 23, Auburn 21	Nebraska 21, Auburn 17	Nebraska 24, Auburn 17
Oklahoma vs. Boise State	Oklahoma 30, Boise State 14	Oklahoma 21, Boise State 10	Oklahoma 38, Boise State 13	Oklahoma 31, Boise State 17	Oklahoma 28, Boise State 10
USC vs. Michigan	USC 27, Michigan 23	USC 31, Michigan 28	USC 30, Michigan 20	USC 31, Michigan 28	USC 21, Michigan 17
Florida vs. Ohio State	Ohio State 26, Florida 22	Ohio State 35, Florida 27	Ohio State 33, Florida 17	Ohio State 38, Florida 28	Ohio State 24, Florida 21
Last Week	2-2	3-1	2-1	2-2	2-1
Season	33-19	39-13	41-11	41-11	39-13

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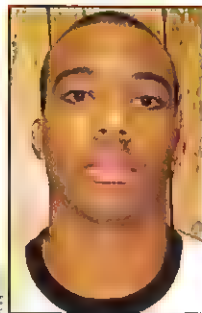
Class Grows

Huskers head into home stretch with 20 commits

By Rick Shaw



Travis Lewis



Marcus Mendoza

It's been a busy 30 days on the Nebraska recruiting front. The Husker coaching staff picked up commitments from six prospects, all of whom reside, at least, 1,000 miles from the Nebraska campus. In addition, NU lost out on one of its long-standing pledges, as linebacker Jared Glover of Bixby, Okla., reneged on his prior commitment to Nebraska. Glover announced that he, instead, will sign a letter of intent with Oklahoma State in February.

NU's commitment list showed 20 prospects in mid-December. With just under 60 days remaining until Signing Day in February, the Huskers have rounded the final turn and are heading down the home stretch in efforts to finalize their 2007 recruiting class.

Travis Lewis may be the top athlete in Nebraska's class at this point. The 6-foot-1, 213-pound safety/linebacker out of San Antonio (Lee), Texas, delivered his pledge to the Husker coach-

ing staff right before Thanksgiving, choosing Nebraska over Oklahoma.

Lewis, rated the No. 46 prospect in the state by Rivals.com, ran one of the top 10 40-yard dash times at the Nike Training Combines last summer. Performing alongside hundreds of other athletes, Lewis turned in a blazing fast 4.34-second 40-yard dash. He also recorded a 34-inch vertical jump and a 4.25-second shuttle.

The blue-chipper out of Texas said it was his relationship with the Nebraska coaching staff that made the difference in the end.

"I'm going to Nebraska," Lewis said. "I was thinking about it all week-end and all of last week. It was so close. In the end, Nebraska just felt like the right place.

"Coach (Phil) Elmassian and Coach (Bill) Callahan treated me really well, and the talks we had were really great. We talked about everything in depth, and I just came to like Nebraska and them."

NEBRASKA COMMITMENTS FOR 2007

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	40	Hometown (School)
Anthony Blue	DB	5-10	172	4.57	Cedar Hill, Texas
Quentin Castille	RB	6-1	234	4.6	La Porte, Texas
Jared Crick	DE	6-6	245	4.8	Cozad, Neb.
Demetrious Davis	DT	6-2	286	5.22	St. Joseph, Mo. (Benton)
Patrick Grant	DE	6-4	220	4.51	Lauderdale Lakes, Fla. (Boyd Anderson)
Eric Hagg	WR	6-1	192	4.52	Peoria, Ariz. (Ironwood)
Roy Helu	RB	5-11	206	4.62	Danville, Calif. (San Ramon Valley)
Ryan Hill	TE	6-3	230	4.7	Arvada, Colo. (West)
Adi Kunalic	K	6-0	175	4.67	Fort Worth, Texas (North Crowley)
Blake Lawrence	LB	6-2	199	4.65	Overland Park, Kan. (Shawnee Mission West)
Zac Lee	QB	6-2	200	4.6	San Francisco, Calif. (St. Ignatius/ City College of San Francisco)
Travis Lewis	LB	6-1	213	4.34	San Antonio, Texas (Lee)
Marcus Mendoza	RB	5-10	175	4.4	Houston, Texas (Spring Woods)
Armando Murillo	DB	6-0	195	4.4	Tampa, Fla. (Robinson/Eastern Arizona CC)
Niles Paul	WR	6-2	210	4.4	Omaha, Neb. (North)
David Ross	DB	6-0	174	4.5	Compton, Calif. (Dominguez)
Shawn Sullivan	DB	5-11	182	4.4	Brenham, Texas
Latravis Washington	DB	6-3	210	4.55	Bradenton, Fla. (Bayshore)
DeAndre West	DB	6-1	195	4.4	Oakland, Calif. (Wilson Prep)
Patrick Witt	QB	6-4	215	4.95	Wylie, Texas

For more daily recruiting information, visit HuskersIllustrated.com, a member of the Rivals.com network.

RECRUITING NOTES

Some Change Their Minds

By Sean Stevens

Non-binding oral commitments are just that — non-binding. Thus, high school players are known to change their minds between when they make a "commitment" and when they actually sign on the dotted line. In recent years, this phenomenon has both benefited and harmed Nebraska's recruiting classes.

Back in 2005, the Huskers benefited when wide receiver Chris Brooks changed his commitment from Missouri to Nebraska.

In the 2006 recruiting year, junior college defensive end Rulon Davis and safety Ashley Palmer both pledged to Nebraska, only to change their minds just before Signing Day.

In 2007, things have swung both ways for Nebraska.

San Antonio, Texas, tight end Ian Harris was an early pledge for the Huskers, delivering his commitment in June to the Nebraska coaches. However, the 6-foot-3, 217-pounder continued to look around at other schools after his pledge, specifically taking a visit to Missouri in September. In late November, Harris switched his choice to the Tigers.

"I have committed to Missouri," Harris said. "I have known for a couple weeks now. I just wanted to sit on it and make sure. Coach Gary Pinkel just got a new five-year deal and I really like what they do with their tight ends. Opportunity-wise I felt Missouri was the best fit for me."

Another player who had been a part of the NU class since the beginning of October has also changed his mind recently. Jared Glover, a 6-5, 220-pound outside linebacker from Bixby, Okla., chose to go with Oklahoma State instead of NU.

The Cowboys were his childhood favorite, but by the time he was ready to make an oral commitment, they had filled up at his position. OSU has an opening now, and Glover has decided to take the offer.

Another big part of Glover's decision has to do with his family, as he has a sister who will be attending law school at Oklahoma State who he is very close with.

As if that were not enough, this past week it began to look like the Huskers may lose another Texas high school player, as running back Quentin Castille of La Porte took an official visit to Louisville. After that trip, it appeared that the Cardinals might sway Castille.

"Right now, Louisville and Nebraska are like even," he said. "I did tell Nebraska that I was visiting Louisville this weekend, and they told me to just make the best decision for myself — so they were okay about it."

Castille was concerned about the number of running backs in Nebraska's 2007 pledge class; however, his fears were eliminated after an in-home visit from head coach Bill Callahan.

"Well, I talked to coach Callahan," he said. "He came to my house, and we just talked. That was my final decision. It was just because Nebraska was the team on my mind, and that was my first instinct to choose them."

"They were one of the schools on me the hardest and the earliest from the beginning. They were my favorite as a kid, too. Basically, that was it for me. I just went with my first instinct."

As you can see, Nebraska has come out on both sides of the coin with 2007 oral commitments. ■

Lewis will likely start his Nebraska career as a WILL linebacker, though he has the potential to also play one of the safety positions.

Another top Lone Star athlete to join the Nebraska recruiting fold in November was Marcus Mendoza. The 5-10, 175-pound running back/receiver out of Spring Woods High in Houston chose the Huskers after considering scholarship offers from Oklahoma State, Texas Tech, TCU, Kansas State and others.

"I just felt real comfortable at Nebraska," Mendoza said. "I really like the school, and they were talking to me about how they really wanted me."

Boasting excellent speed (4.4-second 40-yard dash) and athleticism (37-inch vertical jump), Mendoza earned first-team all-district honors as a senior, rushing for 700 yards and seven touchdowns. He also added 259 yards on 20 receptions for another four scores.

Mendoza, rated the No. 41 player in the state by Rivals.com, could line up as either a receiver or a running back in Lincoln.

Eric Hagg, a versatile athlete from Peoria, Ariz., committed to the Nebraska staff after a late November official visit to Lincoln. The 6-1, 192-pound receiver/defensive back out of Ironwood High School, said he was blown away by the sights and sounds of Husker game day.

"Oh man, the atmosphere is crazy, and all the coaches are so nice and stuff," Hagg said.

"The game against Colorado was crazy. The fans were crazy, and the place was packed. There was no room left anywhere. And all of the trick plays were incredible."

Hagg used his long frame and good speed (4.52-second 40-yard dash) to haul in 49 passes for 920 yards and nine touchdowns in 2006. As a cornerback on defense, he contributed 33 tackles and four interceptions.

Rated among the top 20 prospects in the state by Rivals.com, Hagg chose Nebraska over offers from Arizona, Oregon, Oregon State, Utah and others. He's projected to start his Husker career in the defensive backfield.

Four-star cornerback prospect Armando Murillo delivered his pledge to the Nebraska staff during



Quentin Castille



Eric Hagg

the first week of December. Rated among the top 20 junior college prospects in the country by Rivals.com, the 6-0, 195-pound athlete out of Eastern Arizona Community College in Thatcher admitted that he had been a heavy lean to Nebraska for quite some time.

"Nebraska is big-time college football," Murillo said.

"I chose Nebraska because of the school, coaches, players . . . just everything fit together. I knew where I was going. I get out of school mid-December and will be able to enroll at Nebraska in the spring. I have two years to play two."

Murillo chose Nebraska after visiting Arizona State and West Virginia. He also had scholarship offers from Kansas, Louisville, Ole Miss, Oklahoma and Hawaii.

Boasting a 4.4-second 40 time, Murillo earned first team NJCAA All-America honors this past season for Eastern Arizona. He totaled 30 tackles from his cornerback spot and added three interceptions.



Armando Murillo

Latravis Washington formalized his commitment to the Huskers in early December as well. The 6-3, 210-pound safety/linebacker out of Bradenton (Bayshore), Fla., said he had been wanting to commit to Nebraska for several weeks, but his college test scores were holding him back.

"I finally got a qualifying test score on the ACT, so Coach Elmassian said I'll be able to sign a letter of intent with them in February," Washington said.

"Coach Elmassian said I'll come in there as a strong safety/outside linebacker. Actually, kind of like one of those bandit positions."

Washington, rated the No. 77 prospect in the state by Rivals.com, chose Nebraska over an impressive list of suitors. Ohio State, West Virginia, Louisville, Auburn, North Carolina State and others had all thrown their hats in the ring for the talented athlete from the Sunshine State.



Latravis Washington

Washington said his final decision was influenced by his cousin, former Nebraska cornerback and current Oakland Raider Fabian Washington.

"He told me that he loved his time up there and wouldn't trade that decision for the world but, in the end, he told me that it had to be me that made the decision," Washington said. "I finally made it."

Another four-star defensive back appearing in the commit column is David Ross out of Compton (Dominguez), Calif. Rated the No. 25 prospect in the state by Rivals.com, Ross delivered a commitment to the Nebraska coaches with the caveat that he wanted to take, at least, a couple of more visits in January.

"I'm committed to Nebraska," Ross said, "but I think I'm going to visit both Washington and Oregon State as well. I have not been out of California that much. I just want to make sure that I pick the right place." ■



David Ross

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'The System'

NU freshman Anderson has complete trust in his coach

By Mike Babcock

No one has bought into Doc Sadler's system more than Ryan Anderson. No one.

The freshman from Seattle, Wash., has complete trust in his coach. And he's had it from the beginning.

"I believe 100 percent in his system," Anderson said in early November.

"I believe everything he tells me. If we had to go jump off a bridge, I believe I would go jump off a bridge . . . if Doc told me to go jump off a bridge. I believe in Doc."

Sadler hasn't told Anderson to jump off a bridge, and won't because he might do it.

"The thing you've got to like about Ryan Anderson, he's not scared of nobody or nothing," said Sadler. "That's good and bad, understand. But I'll take the way he is every time."

The bad part involves turnovers. Anderson's on-court fearlessness and enthusiasm have translated into a team-high turnover total. Anderson had 25 in the first seven games.

"That's something I've really been concerned about with him," Sadler said. But the good far out-weighs it, which is why Anderson has started every game and played more minutes than anyone except Charles Richardson, who almost never comes out.

Anderson also ranks second on the team in scoring and rebounding, and in those first seven games, he hit 56.5 percent from 3-point range — with 23 attempts, tied for the team high.

Sek Henry, another freshman guard, also cracked the starting lineup to open the season. Neither has surprised Richardson, one of the team's two seniors. "We already knew that these guys



Freshman guard Ryan Anderson was second in scoring and rebounding through seven games.

were going to be a big part of this team," said Richardson. "We don't have too many guys with a lot of experience."

"So they already knew that they were going to come in and be playing right off the top."

The young players, and especially Anderson and Henry, are "handling the pressure real well, but we haven't gotten to conference yet, so we really can't tell how well they'll handle it," he said.

Nebraska opens conference play at Iowa State on Jan. 10.

Anderson was recruited by the previous staff, after played four years at Seattle's Rainier Beach High School. When he was a freshman, Rainier Beach won the state championship and was ranked No. 1 in the nation. The team included NBA players Jamal Crawford and Nate Robinson.

The 6-foot-4, 195-pound Anderson was an all-state selection, averaging 19.4 points, nine rebounds and seven assists, as a senior, for a 23-7 team. He is accustomed to winning.

He also is accustomed to individual success. He was chosen the most valuable player in the 2006 Northwest Shootout high school all-star game, with 39 points and 10 rebounds.

Individual accomplishments haven't been his concern, however. That's not Sadler's system.

Sadler had questions about Anderson's athleticism and whether he would fit in. But those questions have been answered with effort, determination, and a willingness to listen. Anderson "is leading the way, of the freshmen," Richardson said. "He's playing his butt off, like he's been here before."

From the beginning, Sadler was "pretty pleased" with the freshmen. "You see some good things, but you see carelessness and mistakes that some people may not see," he said.

"You can't expect freshmen, as many as we've got, to contribute as much as they are and not be happy. But at the same time, for freshmen, they're getting way too many minutes."

Not that they haven't earned the minutes.

"Coach says all the time, 'opportunity,' get an opportunity to go out there and take advantage of that opportunity," said Anderson. "That's what I'm trying to do."

He has done it by listening to Sadler.

"When you believe in Coach, you buy into his system and you believe in it, the outcome is not going to be too far off from what he says it is. He said we do this and we do that and this will happen. And if you buy into that, the outcome is going to be what he said it would be," Anderson said.

Sadler wouldn't have to say what the outcome of jumping off a bridge would be. But Anderson would do it, nonetheless.

GIMME 3

Aleks Maric got the Cornhuskers off to a fast start against North Texas, hitting the first 3-point shot of his career. "What 3-pointer?" he said when asked about it afterward. "Just kidding . . . I've been practicing them since Doc got here and he told me, 'If you're open, shoot them.'"

Sadler had no problem with the shot, "though I don't want him shooting it on the initial break. I have confidence in just about any of our players (shooting 3-pointers)," said Sadler.

"We shoot them every day. If his feet are set . . . and they've backed off (defensively) and there are 15 or less seconds (on the shot clock), I don't mind him shooting it at all."

Maric was 0-for-4 from 3-point range during his career, 0-for-2 this season.

GET, MAINTAIN POSSESSION

Rebounding and turnovers have been among Sadler's biggest concerns during non-conference play. Opponents were averaging 14 offensive rebounds in the first seven games. "We can't be satisfied

with people just saying we're small therefore we can't defensive rebound," he said.

"We have got to figure out how to get those offensive rebounds down to single digits."

Single-digit turnovers also would look good on the stat sheet. "It's frustrating," Sadler said. "I don't think we understand the value of the basketball. We have got to figure it out. The defensive rebounding and the turnovers, if this basketball team will ever buy into those two things, it could be a good basketball team. But because we haven't bought into those two areas, we're very vulnerable."



Nebraska senior Kiera Hardy (left) is on the Naismith Trophy watch list.

HARDY LISTED

Husker senior Kiera Hardy is among 50 players on the 2007 Naismith Trophy watch list, released by the Atlanta Tipoff Club in mid-December. The list will be pared to 30 in January.

Hardy, the Big 12 player of the week in late November for scoring 55 points in victories at USC and at Cal-Irvine, is a two-time, first-team all-conference selection and Nebraska's career leader in 3-point shots. She also ranks in the top 10 in the Big 12 in 3-point shooting.

Through the first nine games this season, Hardy was hitting 45 percent from 3-point range.

Four other Big 12 players are on the list: Courtney Paris of Oklahoma, Morenike Atunrase of Texas A&M, Lyndsey Medders of Iowa State and Tiffany Jackson of Texas.

RANKED

Coach Connie Yori's team won six in a row after losing its opener at Arizona State to climb into the Associated Press national rankings, at No. 25. The Huskers also were ranked No. 25 for one week in late January of 2004. The ranking "reinforces that our program is headed in the right direction," said Yori.

The next day, Nebraska lost at home to Minnesota, 74-65. But the Huskers recovered to drub Michigan 87-47 four days later, before a Devaney Sports Center crowd of 3,486. ■

MEN'S SCHEDULE

Nov. 6	*Nebraska-Kearney	W 74-72
Nov. 11	*SIU-Edwardsville	L 54-50
Nov. 14	Nebraska-Omaha	W 76-62
Nov. 18	Creighton	W 73-61
Nov. 21	Lubbock Christian	W 65-42
Nov. 27	Arkansas-Pine Bluff	W 71-42
Nov. 29	North Texas	W 76-57
Dec. 2	@Rutgers	L 75-73
Dec. 9	@Oregon	L 68-56
Dec. 17	Alabama A&M	
Dec. 20	**Wyoming	
Dec. 22	**San Francisco/Hawaii	
Dec. 23	**TBA	
Dec. 30	***Miami (FSN Midwest)	
Jan. 3	Savannah State	
Jan. 6	Western Kentucky	
Jan. 10	@Iowa State (FSN Midwest)	
Jan. 13	Oklahoma State (ESPN+)	
Jan. 17	@Oklahoma (FSN Midwest)	
Jan. 20	Colorado (ESPN+)	
Jan. 24	Texas (FSN Midwest)	
Jan. 27	@Kansas St. (FSN Midwest)	
Jan. 29	Kansas (ESPN)	
Feb. 3	@Missouri (ESPN+)	
Feb. 6	@Texas Tech (FSN Midwest)	
Feb. 10	Texas A&M (FSN Midwest)	
Feb. 13	Kansas State (FSN Midwest)	
Feb. 17	@Kansas (ESPN+)	
Feb. 21	@Baylor (FSN Midwest)	
Feb. 24	Missouri (ESPN+)	
Feb. 28	Iowa State	
Mar. 3	@Colorado (ESPN+)	
Mar. 8-11	Big 12 Championship, Oklahoma City	
	*Exhibition	
	**Rainbow Classic, Honolulu, Hawaii	
	***Orange Bowl Classic, Miami, Fla.	

WOMEN'S SCHEDULE

Nov. 1	*Nebraska-Kearney	W 122-55
Nov. 4	*Nebraska-Omaha	W 97-59
Nov. 10	**Arizona State	L 87-60
Nov. 12	**Florida Atlantic	W 93-53
Nov. 13	**New Mexico	W 66-59
Nov. 17	Cal State Fullerton	W 76-62
Nov. 24	@UC Irvine	W 80-66
Nov. 26	@USC	W 72-65
Nov. 28	Texas-Pan American	W 77-37
Dec. 5	Minnesota	L 74-65
Dec. 9	Michigan	W 87-47
Dec. 16	Northwestern	
Dec. 19	@Creighton (Civic)	
Dec. 21	Nicholls State	
Dec. 28	***NC State	
Dec. 29	***Florida/Alabama State	
Jan. 3	@Texas	
Jan. 6	Oklahoma	
Jan. 13	@Kansas	
Jan. 17	Kansas State	
Jan. 20	@Missouri	
Jan. 24	@Texas A&M	
Jan. 27	Kansas	
Jan. 31	Iowa State	
Feb. 3	Baylor (FSN)	
Feb. 7	@Kansas State (FSN Midwest)	
Feb. 10	@Colorado (FSN)	
Feb. 14	Texas Tech	
Feb. 17	Missouri	
Feb. 20	@Iowa State FSN Midwest)	
Feb. 24	@Oklahoma State	
Feb. 27	Colorado	
Mar. 6-10	Big 12 Championship, Oklahoma City	
	*Exhibition	
	**Veterans Day Classic, Tempe, Ariz.	
	**Big 12 Tournament, Dallas, Texas	
	***State Farm Classic, Gainesville, Fla.	

VOLLEYBALL



Moving On . . .

Freshman middle blocker Kori Cooper (left) makes a block and redshirt freshman Rachel Holloway (right) makes a set in Nebraska's 30-16, 30-23, 28-30, 30-16 victory over American in the first round of the NCAA Tournament Dec. 1 at the NU Coliseum. The top-rated Huskers stopped Northern Iowa, 30-16, 30-16, 30-14, the next night to advance to the Regional in Gainesville, Fla. After sweeping San Diego 30-21, 30-20, 30-15 on Dec. 8, the Huskers needed to rally for a 25-30, 22-30, 30-20, 30-25, 15-9 victory over No. 9 Minnesota to clinch a berth in the final four, scheduled for Dec. 14-16 at Qwest Center Omaha. The Huskers, who improved to 31-1, were to face No. 4 UCLA, with Stanford and defending champion Washington meeting in the other semifinal. (Photos by Scott Bruhn)



Sophomore outside hitter Jordan Larson (10, above) was one of four Huskers named to the AVCA All-Central Region team. The other NU honorees were junior right side hitter Sarah Pavan, redshirt freshman setter Rachel Holloway and junior middle blocker Tracy Stalls. It was Pavan's third consecutive first-team selection, while the other three players were all honored for the first time.

NEBRASKA VOLLEYBALL 2006 RESULTS

Aug. 29 San Diego W 3-0

Labor Day Tournament At Lincoln, Neb.

Sept. 1 St. Mary's W 3-0
Sept. 2 Middle Tennessee St. W 3-0
Sept. 3 Long Beach State W 3-0

Players Challenge At Lincoln, Neb.

Sept. 8 Louisville W 3-0
Sept. 9 Cal Poly W 3-0
Sept. 10 Minnesota W 3-1

Sept. 13 Kansas W 3-0
Sept. 16 @Oklahoma W 3-0

Sept. 20 Iowa State W 3-0
Sept. 23 Texas Tech W 3-0
Sept. 24 @Creighton W 3-1
Sept. 30 @Baylor W 3-1
Oct. 4 Kansas State W 3-0
Oct. 7 @Texas A&M W 3-0
Oct. 11 @Missouri W 3-0
Oct. 14 Colorado W 3-0
Oct. 18 @Texas W 3-2
Oct. 25 Missouri W 3-0
Oct. 28 @Kansas State W 3-0
Nov. 1 @Texas Tech W 3-0
Nov. 4 Oklahoma W 3-0
Nov. 8 @Iowa State W 3-1
Nov. 11 @Colorado L 3-2
Nov. 15 Texas A&M W 3-0

Nov. 18 Baylor W 3-0
Nov. 22 @Kansas W 3-0
Nov. 25 Texas W 3-0

NCAA Tournament First/Second Rounds At NU Coliseum

Dec. 1 American W 3-1
Dec. 2 Northern Iowa W 3-0

Regionals At Gainesville, Fla.

Dec. 8 San Diego W 3-0
Dec. 9 Minnesota W 3-2

Final Four
At Qwest Center (Omaha, Neb.)
Dec. 14 UCLA, 6 p.m., ESPN2
Dec. 16 NCAA Final, 8 p.m.

Not Settling

Husker wrestler constantly striving for improvement

By Terry Douglass

How tough is Nebraska wrestler Dominick Moyer?

"He's like an old piece of scrap iron — I mean this guy is tough," Cornhuskers' wrestling Coach Mark Manning says with half a laugh. "He maybe doesn't look like he would be great, but a lot of people across the country would like to have this guy on their team."

Count Manning as one of them.

Moyer, a 141-pounder from Oskaloosa, Iowa, has started his senior season by winning 16 of his first 19 matches and is ranked in the top eight nationally in his weight class.

"So far, I'd say I have performed up to my expectations, but I'm not where I want to be yet," Moyer said. "I've still got a lot of work to do ahead of me. I really need to get better on my feet, and I've been working on developing a shot that I can go to at any time."

Constantly striving for improvement has been a trait Moyer has displayed throughout his career. If he's not building strength in the weight room or working on his stamina, he's trying to fine-tune his skills on the mat.

"That's what he's all about," Manning said. "That just shows his mentality and that he's not settling. He took second in his first three tournaments, and he wants to be the best. He wants to keep improving and that's a great characteristic that not all athletes have."

DOMINICK MOYER
SENIOR WRESTLER

"That's why he's having success at a very high level."

Moyer's goals for this season include a successful team showing and ending his career as an All-American with a top-eight finish in the NCAA Championships at Auburn Hills, Mich., in March.

Despite winning more than 70 matches and being a two-time national tournament qualifier for the Huskers, Moyer wasn't highly recruited out of high school. In fact, he was a walk-on at Nebraska after posting a 146-10 career record in high school that included a pair of state championships.

Manning said Moyer has constantly had to prove himself throughout his wrestling career. So far, he's been up to the challenge.

"What he might lack in talent, Dominick makes up for with heart and fight and determination," Manning said. "He's got big things ahead. He's a force to be reckoned with as far as not only being an All-American, but vying to be a national champion."

"Not a lot of people would've probably predicted that about him four years ago. He's made the most of his talent, and then some."

Moyer's early season performance has Manning confident that Moyer can achieve his goal of becoming an All-

American — maybe more. Moyer was second in the prestigious Las Vegas Invitational in early December and has already defeated two All-American wrestlers this season.

Manning describes Moyer's wrestling style as "dangerous" — as in dangerous to opponents.



"He can pin you from a couple of different positions, and he always seems to put himself in those positions," Manning said. "Plus, he always seems to come on late in the match.

"Dominick has worked on really getting out and getting a fast start because he's a great conditioner, and he's going to fight to the death at the end, so he's really worked on making sure he doesn't get too far behind at the start. That's kind of been his M.O. this year."

Moyer said he tries to take a "high-energy" approach to his matches.

"I just try to keep coming and keep coming," Moyer said. "It doesn't matter what the score of the match is, you just keep putting pressure on your guy."

The approach was developed during his early years in the program, when Moyer took his share of lumps in the practice room.

"It really teaches you some character," Moyer said. "You've to keep coming in, keep plugging away — a lot of people get frustrated, especially if they've had great high school success and then they get down here and get in the room and get beat up on.

"It's pretty humbling. There would be some days I'd go in to practice and not get a takedown. It was just rough."

Now, as one of just two seniors on Nebraska's roster this season — along with Marc Harwood — Moyer has also assumed more of a leadership role. While the responsibility is a new one, it's not something that he's uncomfortable with.

"We've got a young team," Moyer said. "But it's not really that young because a lot of guys are returning from

last year, so they know what's expected of them and how long the season is."

While wrestling essentially breaks down as being an individual sport, Moyer said there are many things he can do to be a team leader.

"You can say stuff before the match and things, but it's mostly when you're out there on the mat," Moyer said. "It might be a case where you're winning by six or seven points and you know you've got to let the guy up and get that extra takedown to get that major (decision) to get more points for the team.

"It's just the little things like that and wrestling hard through the whole match that help you lead the team."

Sometimes, Moyer said, the best leaders don't have to say a word.

"Wrestlers really don't have to talk a lot," Moyer said. "People notice in the practice room and on the mat how hard you're working, and it just seems to be contagious.

"I'm not one of those guys who feels like they have to say a lot, but I want my actions to show what needs to be done."

Manning said leaders like Moyer make the job easy for a coach.

"He keeps all the guys going in the right direction," Manning said. "He steps out on the mat and shows the guys how to compete, how to carry themselves — on and off the mat.

"Dominick even takes care of some things so that we as coaches don't need to. He's the ultimate team guy." ■

Terry Douglass is the sports editor of the *Grand Island (Neb.) Independent*. He can be reached at terry.douglass@charter.net.

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Nebraska junior Dusty Jonas has cleared 7-4 1/4 outdoors and 7-3 3/4 indoors.

He Likes Attention

Junior high jumper enjoys being in the spotlight

BY KATELYN KERKHOVE

Dusty Jonas doesn't have a routine.

What the NCAA All-America high jumper does have, however, is a candy bar on the runway during his competitions. Aching for some icing and sugar, Jonas isn't afraid to pull out a piece of chocolaty goodness before a 7-foot-plus attempt. The La Vernia, Texas, native's bar of choice is a Hershey's Zero bar, but "they don't have those up here in Nebraska," he said.

"I get up whenever, and I go eat something — usually fairly unhealthy like a Honey Bun or a cinnamon roll, because that's what I like to eat. I always have a candy bar when I'm jumping. I like to eat while I jump. But other than all that, I just like to have a good time when I'm out there."

In his two years as a Cornhusker, Jonas has competed in four seasons, two indoor and two outdoor. His most notable honors have included an NCAA Indoor Championship second-place jump of 7-3 3/4 and a Big 12

Conference Outdoor Championship fourth-place jump of 7-2 1/4. He also has placed at the NCAA outdoor as well as at the Big 12 indoor.

But it's what Jonas brings to the runway, besides his talent, that is a crowd pleaser.

Nebraska head coach and high jump specialist Gary Pepin said for most of his athletes the track is like a stage, and Jonas is one of the Cornhuskers' best performers.

"He likes attention, which is good because (high jump) needs somebody who likes to be on stage," Pepin said. "If it bothers you to be up in front of a group and you don't like a lot of attention, it's pretty hard for you. But he likes that. He likes to be in the spotlight. He likes to be the best. He doesn't particularly like to do things he's not good at, like most of us."

Besides the high jump, Jonas also participates in the long and triple jump events. However, this fall has been a bit of a challenge for the junior as his class schedule has cut into his practice time.

Digging in to the core classes of a horticulture and landscape degree, Jonas said he spends almost 20 hours a week on homework on East Campus. This means he is walking into the Bob Devaney Sports Center's track at 5:30 p.m. two nights a week to run and jump by himself.

On the days he can make it for scheduled practices, Jonas is now without teammate Aaron Plas. The Big 12 champion and NCAA All-American provided Jonas with stiff competition at practice and made attempting the higher heights much more exciting during his first two years at Nebraska.

"It's really hard with Plas gone," Jonas said. "Me and him went off each other and could go really high in meets. We just have the redshirt freshmen this year, and no bad talk on them, but they've just got a long way to come. It's just hard for me and Pepin to get together."

While Pepin is also frustrated with the lack of time the two can meet, he said Jonas has made great strides in the weight room even though he has spent less time at the high jump pit.

But coming in for tough workouts by himself is difficult, and Pepin recognizes the challenge. Pepin just hopes that Jonas can embrace it and realize how it could help him down the road if he chooses to jump professionally.

"Certainty, if he extends his career beyond college, which at this point in time I would guess he would, then, boy, it's a really tough adjustment for kids because all of a sudden they don't have to be at practice, they don't have a coach that's there badgering them and making sure they are there every-day," Pepin said. "But I think (this semester) is good for him."

What keeps Jonas motivated alone on the track at night is unusual. He's working hard so he doesn't have to try during competition.

For high jumpers the most important part is letting themselves fly.

At last season's Prairie Wolf Invitational, Jonas said he did just that. Clearing 7-4 1/2, he won the competition and notched a personal best the week before the Big 12 Championships.

"On one of those really good jumps you hit the ground and you don't even have to do anything, you just lay back and you already know you are going to make the bar," Jonas said. "It's just

TRACK & FIELD RECRUITING

Coach Gary Pepin signed what he hopes will be a lucky 13 athletes, eight women and five men, six of them from in state. Distance, hurdles, throws and high jump were emphases, with four of the 13 set to compete for assistant head coach Jay Dirksen in distance events and cross country.

"Our class is very indicative of how our recruiting efforts went with the needs we felt our team has," said Pepin. "They all seem to be outstanding young people, both athletically and academically."

Rachel Butler
Lara Crofford
Arna Erega
Jade Hodson
Karyn LaCour
Ashley Miller
Audrey Svane
Natalie Willer

Multi-events
Distance
Sprints/Hurdles
Throws
Sprints/Hurdles
Middle distance
High jump
Pole vault

WOMEN

Mechanicsville, Va. (Lee-Davis)
Newville, Pa. (Big Springs)
Rijeka, Croatia (First Croatian Grammar School)
Hastings, Neb. (Adams Central)
Humble, Texas (Humble)
Tipton, Iowa (Tipton)
Tioga, Texas (Pilot Point)
Elkhorn, Neb. (Elkhorn)

David Adams
Matt Conahan
Brad Doering
Paul Hamilton
Sam Siegel

Distance
Distance
Distance
High jump
Throws

MEN

York, Neb. (York)
Omaha, Neb. (Millard North)
Yuba City, Calif. (Yuba City)
Sidney, Neb. (Sidney)
Lincoln, Neb. (Southwest)

like you are waiting for the cushy landing. It's like that feeling of weightlessness for a split-second. It's the closest people can get to flying — without a pole; that's just cheating."

Going into his junior season, Jonas said he couldn't be happier with where he is at. He said he will continue to jump as long as it makes him happy, but beyond that it's hard to tell what the future will bring.

"I've always bounced around on

things, and if they want to send me to school for it and I get to jump over a stick that's awesome," Jonas said. "The competitive nature of it, it's nothing like the sprints. It's not as high-profile, but I like to make it that way."

"I've watched competitions other places and it's just boring. People come to watch a track meet, and I want them to enjoy it while I'm out there. I'm like a little dog; somebody's always got to be petting me, or I get tired." ■

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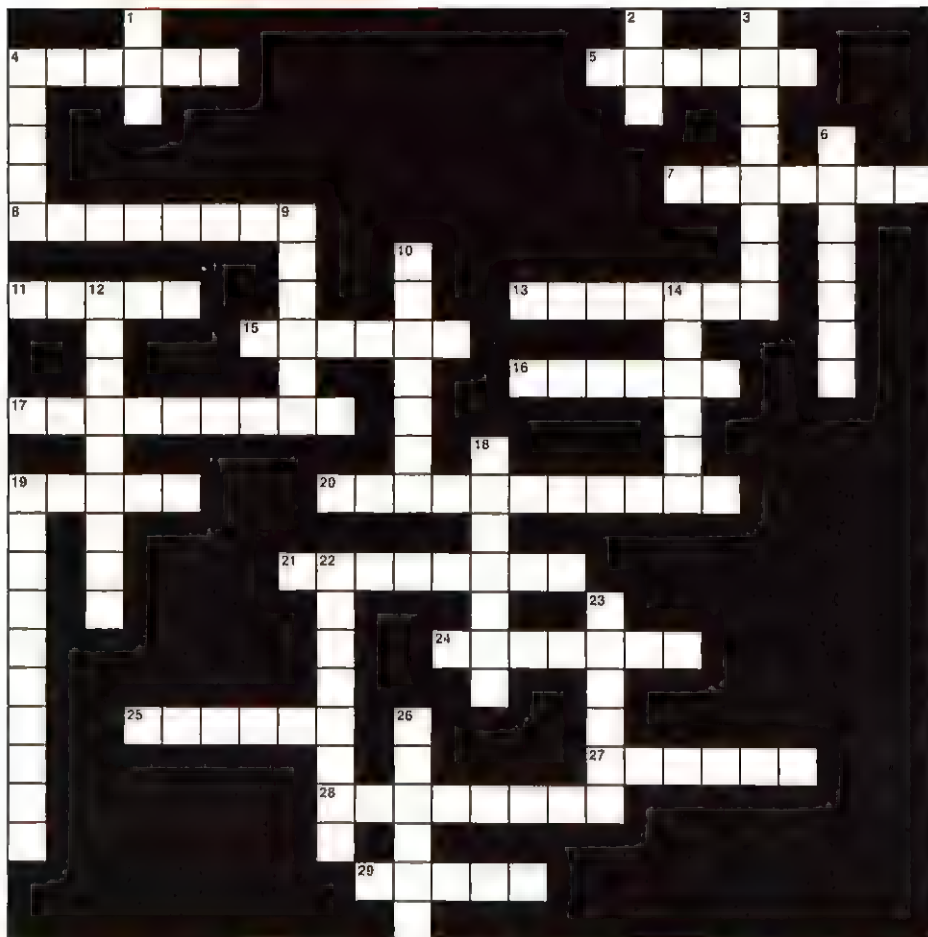
ACROSS

- 4 Auburn nickname
- 5 NU's second Heisman winner
- 7 Former NBA star from Auburn
- 8 Auburn's 1971 Heisman winner
- 11 NU's safeties coach
- 13 Leading rusher vs. Oklahoma
- 15 Big 12 Offensive Player of the Year
- 16 Cotton Bowl location
- 17 NU's cornerbacks coach
- 19 Times NU and Auburn have played
- 20 Caught TD pass vs. Oklahoma
- 21 NU's sack leader
- 24 NU's opponent in Jan. 1, 1980, Cotton Bowl
- 25 NU cornerback who missed 2006 season
- 27 NU's receiving leader
- 28 Handed Auburn its first loss in 2006
- 29 Had only sack vs. Oklahoma

DOWN

- 1 Auburn conference (abbrev.)
- 2 Network for Cotton Bowl telecast
- 3 Leading receiver vs. Oklahoma
- 4 NU's opponent in Jan. 1, 1974, Cotton Bowl
- 6 State Auburn is located in
- 9 Opponent in 2007 opener
- 10 Handed Auburn its second loss in 2006
- 12 Cotton Bowl TV play-by-play announcer
- 14 Had interception vs. Oklahoma
- 18 Auburn's 1985 Heisman winner
- 19 Auburn head coach
- 22 NU's opponent in Jan. 1, 1965, Cotton Bowl
- 23 Big 12 Coach of the Year
- 26 Leading tackler vs. Oklahoma

Answers in February issue



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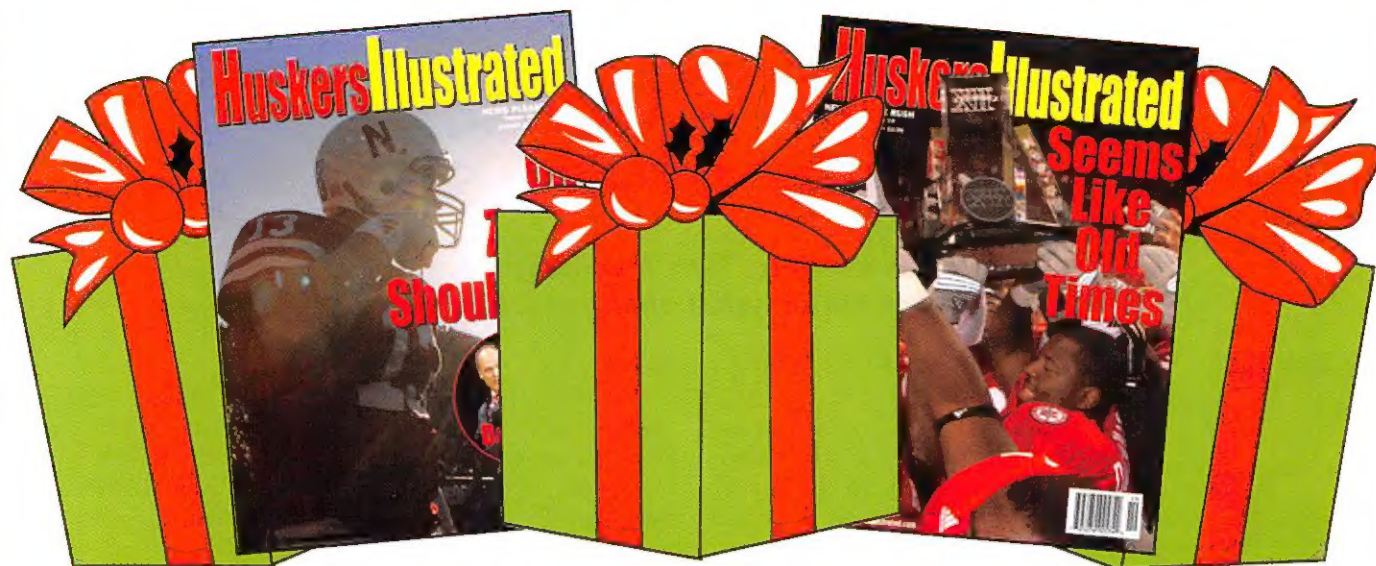
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No Hiding Disappointment

Callahan vows to 'take inventory of where we've got to get better, what changes we've got to make'



Mike BABCOCK

"SO WHAT WE'RE GOING TO DO is get ready for the Cotton Bowl . . ."

Bill Callahan fidgeted, looking to his left, while Jim Rose, host of The Coach Callahan Show, wrapped up the Big 12 Championship game recap on the night after.

"We'll talk to you next time," Rose said in closing.

Callahan was ready to leave. Still on camera, he removed the small microphone attached to the front of his shirt and pushed his chair away from the table at which the two sat.

Undoubtedly, he was off the set by the time the first credits appeared on the screen.

Undoubtedly, he was preparing for the Cotton Bowl game, still a month away.

Minutes earlier, after the last of the "highlights" on the hour-long show, Callahan called the game "just horrendous. I was really disappointed in our performance down in Arrowhead (Stadium) and just sick, really sick about what transpired down there," he said. "I feel terrible. I feel bad.

"I apologize to our fans and our players."

He was apologizing on behalf of the coaches — and himself in particular.

"We could have done better," he said.

Anyone who has wondered, even a little, about Callahan's commitment to his players need only have watched that show or paid attention to his comments in the days following the loss to Oklahoma. Every Cornhusker mistake, and there were a few, was on his shoulders, he said.

For example, Maurice Purify's fumble on the game's first play from scrimmage to set up Oklahoma at the 2-yard line was his fault, according to Callahan. And Zac Taylor's uncharacteristic three interceptions were a result of his having put Taylor in poor position with his play-calling, he claimed.

"I was just disappointed in everything I did," Callahan said during the Big 12 coaches teleconference on the Monday after the game. "I just could have done a better job. I just didn't do enough."

He vowed to "take inventory of where we've got to get better, what changes we've got to make. If we've got to change some things, I'm going to make them. I'm looking at it really hard."

He wasn't specific about the changes, saying only that "whatever I've got to do to change I'm going to change it. I'm going to get this thing to where we can get to a cham-

pionship level."

Nebraska hadn't gotten to the conference championship game since 1999, too long, certainly, for the tradition-rich program in Callahan's care. But he's been in charge only three years, and when you consider the magnitude of the changes involved in implementing his system, three years aren't many.

Getting to the title game was a significant accomplishment, regardless of whether the Big 12's North Division was down. The Cornhuskers earned their way to Kansas City. They didn't back in.

That was no consolation, however. Callahan was still upset when he met with the team on the Monday after the game. "He was in and out of there; he was that upset,"

said nose tackle Ola Dagunduro, one of the team's 19 seniors. "He took full blame and responsibility for the game."

He was as down as Dagunduro had seen him in two seasons at Nebraska.

"I know he really wanted this for our seniors," Dagunduro said. "I think the seniors all have a strong relationship with him, and he really wanted for us to go out with a bang. He felt like he let us down.

"You could see that in his face and (in) the way he was acting."

The players "wanted to just tell him, 'It's not all on you. We failed you, too.' We don't want him to feel like it's all on him. It's us, too. We failed ourselves, too," said Dagunduro.

In his first season at Nebraska, Callahan was criticized after not allowing part of the team on the field for pregame warm-ups at Memorial Stadium, a policy he immediately changed. He also was taken to task for referring to a season-ending loss against Colorado as just one game in one season.

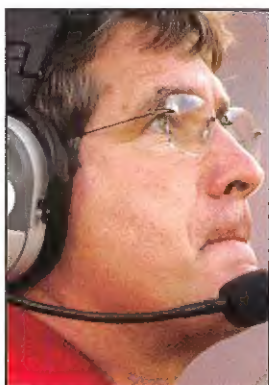
Critics claimed that remark was evidence he was insensitive to Cornhusker tradition.

His demeanor after the Big 12 Championship game provided dramatic evidence to the contrary. "I don't think our fans deserve it," he said. "Our fans waited a long time for that, and I apologize to them. I'm really, really upset . . . really upset with that performance, and it falls on my shoulders.

"Again, I'm pretty aggravated, to say the least."

He wouldn't have needed to say that. It was apparent in his demeanor after the Oklahoma game. And just as apparent, the only thing that would alleviate the aggravation was getting back to work.

Preparing for the Cotton Bowl game against Auburn represented salvation. ■



Bill Callahan's Huskers take a 9-4 record to the Jan. 1 Cotton Bowl.

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